

Ezekiel 24 - Ezekiel's Wife Dies—A Picture Of Sin's Great Cost

Memory Verse

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Revision

Last time we saw that Judah did not learn from the mistakes that Israel (the northern kingdom) made. Israel chose to forget God, and as a result, sought their strength and security elsewhere. They put their trust in the nation of Assyria, the world power at the time. Of course, we become like what we put our trust in, and so Israel became like the Assyrians; they adopted their idols and other worldly ways. God then used the Assyrians they loved and admired so much to judge them by defeating them and taking them captive. This principle holds true for us today as well—*the sin we love will ultimately destroy us, or, God will use the sin we love to discipline us.*

God basically asks Judah the question, “If you know what Israel did, and how they suffered because of the bad choices they made, then why are you deliberately going down the same road? Don't you realise that you will suffer the same judgement? The problem is that sin binds, blinds, and befuddles us, and we therefore rush headlong down the road that leads to our destruction. But we don't have to. All we have to do is learn from the examples of those who have gone before. The book of Ezekiel is filled with examples that we can learn from.

1 Corinthians 10:11 NLT paraphrase

These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age.

Romans 15:4 NLT paraphrase

Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.

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We continue to move forward in time. In Ezekiel chapter 21 we saw God telling Ezekiel that Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, was on the move towards Israel. Now in this chapter we see that he has arrived at Jerusalem, and that the siege has begun. Despite this, the people thought that Jerusalem would survive and everything would be okay again. Why? Because for the past 6 or so years the false prophets had predicted that Nebuchadnezzar and his army would be defeated or return home. Therefore, God gives Ezekiel his hardest and most painful visual message yet—the death of his wife. This was a most shocking image that described just how terrible it would be for the people once they had lost the “desire of their eyes” (the temple), and their sons and daughters whom they loved. God also describes the cleansing that He would accomplish by this judgement; they would be like scum or rust in a pot that was literally burned off.

Outline of Ezekiel 24:

1. The symbol of the boiling pot (1-14)
2. Ezekiel's wife dies (15-27)

1. The symbol of the boiling pot (1-14)

Ezekiel 24:1-14 NKJV

Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “Son of man, write down the name of the day, this very day—the king of Babylon started his siege against Jerusalem this very day. ³ And utter a parable to the rebellious house, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God:

“Put on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it. ⁴ Gather pieces of meat in it, every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder. Fill it with choice cuts; ⁵ take the choice of the flock. Also pile fuel bones under it, make it boil well, and let the cuts simmer in it.”

⁶ ‘Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is in it, and whose scum is not gone from it! Bring it out piece by piece, on which no lot has fallen. ⁷ For her blood is in her midst; she set it on top of a rock; she did not pour it on the ground, to cover it with dust. ⁸ That it may raise up fury and take vengeance, I have set her blood on top of a rock, that it may not be covered.”

⁹ ‘Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Woe to the bloody city! I too will make the pyre great. ¹⁰ Heap on the wood, kindle the fire; cook the meat well, mix in the spices, and let the cuts be burned up.

¹¹ “Then set the pot empty on the coals, that it may become hot and its bronze may burn, that its filthiness may be melted in it, that its scum may be consumed. ¹² She has grown weary with lies, and her great scum has not gone from her. Let her scum be in the fire! ¹³ In your filthiness is lewdness. Because I have cleansed you, and you were not cleansed, you will not be cleansed of your filthiness anymore, till I have caused My fury to rest upon you.

¹⁴ I, the Lord, have spoken it; it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not hold back, nor will I spare, nor will I relent; according to your ways and according to your deeds they will judge you,” says the Lord God.’ ”

Ezekiel 24:1-2 NKJV—The start of the siege of Jerusalem

Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “Son of man, write down the name of the day, this very day—the king of Babylon started his siege against Jerusalem this very day.

v 1 **In the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month:** This was an important date for the nation of Judah—a bit like 9/11 is for the Americans. God instructed Ezekiel to record the exact date when Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, began his third and final siege of Jerusalem. This exact date is also recorded in 2 Kings 25:1; Jeremiah 39:1, and Jeremiah 52:4. This is also an important date because it verified that God was true to His word. For around 6 years God had been warning the people of Judah about this exact event, but the false prophets in Jerusalem and Babylon said it would never happen. This showed that Ezekiel and Jeremiah were the true prophets, and that the other popular prophets were the false prophets, and their long foretold judgement had started.

Ezekiel 24:3-5 NKJV—Jerusalem described as a boiling pot

³ And utter a parable to the rebellious house, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Put on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it. ⁴ Gather pieces of meat in it, every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder. Fill it with choice cuts; ⁵ take the choice of the flock. Also pile fuel bones under it, make it boil well, and let the cuts simmer in it.”

This large copper (see v 11) wide mouthed cooking pot represents Jerusalem. The meat is the people in it. The fire is the judgement or siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Interestingly, the fire that causes the pot to boil is fuelled by animal, or possibly human, bones.

Ezekiel 24:6-8 NKJV—*Woe to the bloody city of Jerusalem*

Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is in it, and whose scum is not gone from it! Bring it out piece by piece, on which no lot has fallen. ⁷ For her blood is in her midst; she set it on top of a rock; she did not pour it on the ground, to cover it with dust. ⁸ That it may raise up fury and take vengeance, I have set her blood on top of a rock, that it may not be covered.”

v 6 **Woe to the bloody city:** Jerusalem is the **bloody city** on two counts. Firstly, because of all the innocent blood that had already been shed in it, and secondly, because of the blood that would be shed as Nebuchadnezzar attacked them.

v 6 **To the pot whose scum is in it:** **Scum** is better translated as *rust* or *impure deposit*. As the heat was applied, the poor quality of the pot would become apparent to all. The rust or corrosion would flake off and contaminate the meat being cooked. The scum or rust represents the sinfulness of the people living in Jerusalem.

“Some translate the word as ‘scum,’ but ‘rust’ is more correct. It was a symbol of the corrosion and corruption of the city and may have represented the blood of victims slain through intrigue and oppression.” (Feinberg)

“Filthiness, her abominations, all her lewdness, are still within her; they have not been punished, restrained, or cast out by the execution of just and good laws; but the citizens have with obstinacy, impenitence, and with impudence continued in them.” (Poole)

v 6 **Bring it out piece by piece, on which no lot has fallen:** Basically, the meat was unfit for human consumption. The meat would be pulled out piece by piece, but would not be given to anyone—**on which no lot has fallen**. *Sin had defiled the people and made them good for nothing*. Remember that the corrupt leaders, unfaithful priests, and false prophets in Jerusalem had convinced themselves that because they had the temple, they were undefeatable. They thought that God would look after them because they were His chosen people and He would not allow His temple to be defiled or destroyed. They had no concept of God’s holiness and hatred of sin.

v 7-8 **For her blood is in her midst... I have set her blood on top of a rock, that it may not be covered:** There are two ways that this was true for Jerusalem. Firstly, during the siege, the sheer quantity of death and bloodshed would prevent all the bodies from receiving proper burial, and therefore they would be exposed. This went against all the Jews believed and practiced concerning death and burial.

Secondly, the blood also represents the those who have died due to murder, being unjustly convicted, and human sacrifice. Like God said of Abel’s blood in Genesis 4:10, “*The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground,*” the blood shed unjustly in Jerusalem also cried out for vengeance. There was no hiding their sin.

Ezekiel 24:9-13—*The perils of not repenting when disciplined by God*

⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Woe to the bloody city! I too will make the pyre great. ¹⁰ Heap on the wood, kindle the fire; cook the meat well, mix in the spices, and let the cuts be burned up.

¹¹ “Then set the pot empty on the coals, that it may become hot and its bronze may burn, that its filthiness may be melted in it, that its scum may be consumed. ¹² She has grown weary with lies, and her great scum has not gone from her. Let her scum be in the fire! ¹³ In your filthiness is lewdness. Because I have cleansed you, and you were not cleansed, you will not be cleansed of your filthiness anymore, till I have caused My fury to rest upon you.

v 9 **Woe to the bloody city:** The judgement is not over yet, it gets much worse.

v 9 **I will make the pyre great:** “The fire under the cooking pot is now described as a **pyre**—a burning for the dead. The fire will be huge, and the contents of the pot will first **be burned up**—then, the pot itself will **become hot and its bronze may burn**. All of Jerusalem’s impurities, her **scum**, will **be consumed** in the judgment coming upon her.”
“(David Guzik)

“Let the siege be *severe*, the carnage great, and the ruin and catastrophe complete.”
(Clarke)

“The great opportunity [for repentance] had passed by. And therefore, says the Lord, the fire will be an agent of destruction with no purificatory features whatever. The fire—now the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians—will be heaped up, and the pot will be reduced to molten metal. There will be no regeneration, only total destruction.”
(Vawter and Hoppe)

v 12 **She has grown weary with lies:** Another consequence of sin—weariness and tiredness, the draining away of our energy and enthusiasm for the Lord. We no longer have energy to read the Word, pray, fellowship, or evangelise. Sin sucks the very life from us and robs us of the joy of abiding in God. *What promises joy actually steals joy.*

v 13 **you will not be cleansed of your filthiness anymore, till I have caused My fury to rest upon you:** This reminds us that God always has a plan when disciplining His people, that being to lead them to repentance. The implication is that they would seek repentance and they would be cleansed only after God’s fury had rested upon them. God would do whatever it took to cause His people to come to their senses.

Application: Blatant, unrestrained sexual sin is a sign of a nation ripe for judgement

v 13 **In your filthiness is lewdness:** Clarke on **Lewdness**, “A word that denominates the worst kinds of impurity; adultery, incest, &c., and the purpose, wish, design, and ardent desire to do these things. Hers were not accidental sins, they were abominations by design.”

The dictionary definition of **Lewdness** is, “sexually unchaste (impure) or licentious (disregarding sexual restraints)”. In this context it encompasses all sexual sin. For emphasis, God has described Judah as being **lewd** 14 times up to this point.

Lewdness is also a mark of our culture today. More and more our culture *sexually impure* and is *disregarding or casting off sexual restraint*. More and more it’s “anything goes” when it comes to sexual sin and the whole LBGTQ agenda. If God were addressing our culture today, I wonder how many times He would have to repeat the word **Lewd** to describe all the pornography, rape, incest, homosexuality, fornication (sex and improper touching before marriage), and adultery. Again, without repentance, our nation is ripe for judgement as we wallow in the world’s moral sewerage.

Application: The perils of not repenting when disciplined by God

v 13 **Because I have cleansed you, and you were not cleansed, you will not be cleansed of your filthiness anymore, till I have caused My fury to rest upon you:** God had been faithful to repeatedly, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade, century after century, send His prophets to warn the people and ask them to repent of their sins so they could come back to the place of blessing. However, they consistently refused—**Because I have cleansed you, and you were not cleansed.** Now they have reached the end of the road, God’s patience has run out, and there would be no more opportunities for repentance—**you will not be cleansed of your filthiness anymore, till I have caused My fury to rest upon you.**

Here we see the peril of refusing to submit to God’s discipline, of persisting in sin, of continuing to allow sin to harden our hearts. In the case of the Israelites, their hearts had become so hard that they were beyond remedy. Like in the example of the potter and the clay, they had to be smashed and remade.

Hebrews 3:12-13 NLT paraphrase

Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God.¹³ You must warn each other every day, while it is still “today,” so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.

Following is the historical account of this event from 2 Chronicles which highlights God’s patience, the people’s consistent refusal to repent, and the terrible consequence of the people’s choice to persist in their sin—**the Lord’s anger could no longer be restrained and nothing could be done** (2 Chronicles 36:16).

2 Chronicles 36:11-21 NLT paraphrase

¹¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. ¹² **But Zedekiah did what was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and he refused to humble himself when the prophet Jeremiah spoke to him directly from the Lord.** ¹³ He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, even though he had taken an oath of loyalty in God’s name. **Zedekiah was a hard and stubborn man, refusing to turn to the Lord, the God of Israel.**

¹⁴ **Likewise, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful.** They followed all the pagan practices of the surrounding nations, desecrating the Temple of the Lord that had been consecrated in Jerusalem.

¹⁵ *The Lord, the God of their ancestors, repeatedly sent his prophets to warn them, for he had compassion on his people and his Temple.* ¹⁶ **But the people mocked these messengers of God and despised their words. They scoffed at the prophets until the Lord’s anger could no longer be restrained and nothing could be done.**

The Fall of Jerusalem

¹⁷ So the Lord brought the king of Babylon against them. The Babylonians killed Judah’s young men, even chasing after them into the Temple. They had no pity on the people, killing both young men and young women, the old and the infirm. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁸ The king took home to Babylon all the articles, large and small, used in the Temple of God, and the treasures from both the Lord’s Temple and from the palace of the king and his officials. ¹⁹ Then his army burned the Temple of God, tore down the walls of Jerusalem, burned all the palaces, and completely destroyed

everything of value. ²⁰ The few who survived were taken as exiles to Babylon, and they became servants to the king and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power.

²¹ **So the message of the Lord spoken through Jeremiah was fulfilled.** The land finally enjoyed its Sabbath rest, lying desolate until the seventy years were fulfilled, just as the prophet had said.

We must be so careful to not take God's mercy, grace, lovingkindness, and patience for granted. We will not lose our salvation if we persist in sin, just like Israel still belonged to God despite their sin, but we will bring much shame to ourselves, the church, and God. Sin brings death, death to all we hold dear as a believer in Christ. God is jealous for us to follow and obey Him alone because He desires to bless us. If we commit harlotry and go after worldly pleasures and pursuits, then we forsake many of God's blessings.

Galatians 6:7-9 NLT paraphrase

Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. ⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. ⁹ So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.

God's mercy and patience are designed to bring us to repentance, so let's not waste the opportunity to come back into fellowship with God and enjoy His love and blessings once again.

2 Peter 3:9 NLT paraphrase

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

Ezekiel 24:14 NKJV—*God always does what He says He will do*

I, the Lord, have spoken it; it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not hold back, nor will I spare, nor will I relent; according to your ways and according to your deeds they will judge you," says the Lord God.' "

v 14 **I, the Lord, have spoken it; it shall come to pass:** God is here emphasizing that things would happen just as He had said. The false prophets may dream up many nice scenarios as they tell the people what they want to hear, but only God's Word would actually come to pass—Judah would be judged severely by the Babylonians.

v 14 **According to your ways and according to your deeds:** God is always fair. God will never punish us more than our sins deserve, in fact, He punishes us less than our sins deserve (see Psalm 103:10), but we are still disciplined in accordance with what we have done—**according to your ways and according to your deeds.**

Psalm 103:8-12 NKJV

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. ⁹ He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. ¹⁰ He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.

¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Also, consider that the Israelites had entered into a covenant relationship with God, which included blessings if they obeyed, and curses if they did not. God is simply enforcing the covenant that the Israelites had previously agreed to at Mount Sinai.

2. Ezekiel's wife dies (15-27)

Ezekiel 24:15-27 NKJV

Also the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ¹⁶ “Son of man, behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke; yet you shall neither mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down. ¹⁷ Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead; bind your turban on your head, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your lips, and do not eat man’s bread of sorrow.”

¹⁸ So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died; and the next morning I did as I was commanded.

¹⁹ And the people said to me, “Will you not tell us what these things signify to us, that you behave so?”

²⁰ Then I answered them, “The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ²¹ ‘Speak to the house of Israel, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul; and your sons and daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. ²² And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips nor eat man’s bread of sorrow.

²³ Your turbans shall be on your heads and your sandals on your feet; you shall neither mourn nor weep, but you shall pine away in your iniquities and mourn with one another. ²⁴ Thus Ezekiel is a sign to you; according to all that he has done you shall do; and when this comes, you shall know that I am the Lord God.’ ”

²⁵ ‘And you, son of man—will it not be in the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that on which they set their minds, their sons and their daughters: ²⁶ on that day one who escapes will come to you to let you hear it with your ears; ²⁷ on that day your mouth will be opened to him who has escaped; you shall speak and no longer be mute. Thus you will be a sign to them, and they shall know that I am the Lord.’ ”

Ezekiel 24:15-17 NKJV— God tells Ezekiel his wife will die and how he must react

Also the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ¹⁶ “Son of man, behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke; yet you shall neither mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down. ¹⁷ Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead; bind your turban on your head, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your lips, and do not eat man’s bread of sorrow.”

v ¹⁶ I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke: God tells Ezekiel that He will take away his wife, the love of his life, “the desire of your eyes”, quickly, with one stroke.

There are few, if any, earthly things that we love more than our spouse, and this is the whole point of this action sermon. For the Jews, there were few, if any earthly things they loved more than the temple and their children who were left behind in Jerusalem. Sadly, they too would soon experience the same agony of loss that Ezekiel was already experiencing as these two precious things were respectively destroyed and killed as a result of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem.

Four things are worthy of our attention. We see:

- A. God’s compassion and gentleness in His dealings with Ezekiel
- B. God preparing Ezekiel to be able to minister to the people in their suffering
- C. The heart of missions—Ezekiel loved the people like God does
- D. What it costs to be a disciple of Christ

A. God's compassion and gentleness in His dealings with Ezekiel

Firstly, notice how gentle and understanding God is with Ezekiel. God recognises just how much Ezekiel loved his wife and how important she was to him—**the desire of your eyes**. The word translated “**desire**” means: *the object of desire, the delight, grace, beauty, something precious, and what is pleasing to the eyes*. God knows that this action sermon will be difficult for Ezekiel, and He empathises with him. God doesn't enjoy seeing us suffer. Isaiah 63:9 tells us that, "In all their affliction He was afflicted" (NKJV), and, "In all their suffering he also suffered" (NLT). God cares for us.

1 Peter 5:7 NLT paraphrase

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

B. God preparing Ezekiel to be able to minister to the people in their suffering

Secondly, in the midst of his trial, Ezekiel would have experienced God's comfort. God was preparing Ezekiel to be able to comfort His people when tragedy struck them. Ezekiel wouldn't have been able to empathise with them, or share comfort with them, unless he had first suffered and subsequently received that same comfort from God. Therefore, God is preparing Ezekiel for the time when the rest of the Jews got their bad news about the temple being destroyed and their children dying.

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 NLT paraphrase

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. **4 He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.** **5** For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. **6** Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. **7** We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us.

The same is true for us today. We may wonder why we go through hard times. One of the reasons, apart from it possibly being God's discipline or persecution, is that God is simply preparing us to be able to minister to and genuinely empathise with others.

C. The heart of missions—Loving God means loving others sacrificially

Thirdly, notice how Ezekiel loved God more than His wife. When she died, he didn't complain, but instead willingly obeyed God by not mourning for her. Abraham also passed a similar test when he proved that he was willing to sacrifice his only son Isaac in Genesis 22. This shows why Ezekiel and Abraham were able to be used by God to such a great extent—every part of their lives were surrendered to God. This love for God overflowed and resulted in Ezekiel having an agape or unconditional love for the people he was ministering to—people who hated him. He was patient and gentle with them, as well as very honest. Ezekiel “spoke the truth in love” (see Ephesians 4:15). Ezekiel was willing to sacrifice everything, including his wife when asked to by God, in order to help the rebellious people come back into relationship with God. Paul also had a heart for missions. Like God who gave His only Son, so Paul was willing to give even his own life to see others come to know Jesus as their Saviour.

Romans 9:2-3 NLT paraphrase

My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief ³ for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them.

D. What it costs to be a disciple of Christ

Fourthly, we see a practical application of what it costs to be a disciple or follower of Christ. We are told that we must put Jesus above everything else. This is what repentance is, that change of heart where we become willing to do what God wants instead of what we want, in every area of our lives—this is true repentance. Of course the practical application of this change (our sanctification), is a life long process. However, true salvation must begin with our willingness to forsake all for Jesus.

Luke 14:25-28 NLT paraphrase

A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, ²⁶ “If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.

²⁸ “But don’t begin until you count the cost.

Here we see that Ezekiel had counted the cost. He couldn’t have been used by God unless he had. Like Abraham in Genesis 22, Ezekiel demonstrated that he loved God more than than anyone and anything else.

v 16 **Yet you shall neither mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down. ¹⁷ Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead; bind your turban on your head, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your lips, and do not eat man’s bread of sorrow:** Simply put, Ezekiel was not allowed to display any outward signs of mourning. This would also be true for the rest of the people soon enough as the national calamity eclipsed personal tragedy. The shock, grief, and pain would simply be overwhelming. Also, they would know that they had brought all this suffering upon themselves.

Jeremiah 16:5-7 NLT paraphrase

This is what the Lord says: “Do not go to funerals to mourn and show sympathy for these people, for I have removed my protection and peace from them. I have taken away my unfailing love and my mercy. ⁶ Both the great and the lowly will die in this land. No one will bury them or mourn for them. Their friends will not cut themselves in sorrow or shave their heads in sadness. ⁷ No one will offer a meal to comfort those who mourn for the dead—not even at the death of a mother or father. No one will send a cup of wine to console them.

v 17 **Sigh in silence:** “In that we see the understanding heart of God. He knew the sorrow of His servant’s soul, both personal and public, and did not rebuke it. In days when public testimony demands that we rise superior to private sorrows, it is good to know that He understands the difficulty, and does not forbid the sigh.” (Morgan)

Ezekiel 24:18-19—Ezekiel’s wife dies

¹⁸ **So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died; and the next morning I did as I was commanded.**

¹⁹ **And the people said to me, “Will you not tell us what these things signify to us, that you behave so?”**

v 18 **So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died:** Just imagine how difficult it would have been for the soft hearted Ezekiel to faithfully go out to the people and deliver this startling message.

v 18 **The next morning I did as I was commanded:** This would have been a tough ask, because Ezekiel’s natural reaction would have been to weep and mourn over the loss of His wife. What this one off incident shows though is that, by God’s grace, we are not slaves to our emotions.

v 19 **Will you not tell us what these things signify to us, that you behave so?** Ezekiel's action sermon had the desired effect. The event shocked the people and now they were actually seeking to know what God was saying to them.

Ezekiel 24:20-24 NKJV—God explains the sign to the people

Then I answered them, "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ²¹ 'Speak to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord God: **'Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul; and your sons and daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword.** ²² And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips nor eat man's bread of sorrow. ²³ Your turbans shall be on your heads and your sandals on your feet; you shall neither mourn nor weep, but you shall pine away in your iniquities and mourn with one another. ²⁴ Thus Ezekiel is a sign to you; according to all that he has done you shall do; and when this comes, you shall know that I am the Lord God.' "

Just like Ezekiel's wife died suddenly, so the temple or sanctuary would be destroyed quickly. Also their loved ones still in Jerusalem would perish. The problem with the Jews was that they had put their confidence and trust in the temple building, and not in God—it had become their **arrogant boast**, something that was most precious to them (**The desire of your eyes**), and something that they delighted in the most (**The delight of your soul**). As we have learned previously, anything that we put confidence in, in place of God Himself, will be taken away from us, as God teaches us to depend only upon Him. Jeremiah 7:1-15 is a powerful message regarding their false confidence in the temple, and how they thought they could do what they wanted because of the temple.

v 24 **When this comes, you shall know that I am the Lord God:** "The consistent purpose of God throughout the book of Ezekiel is the revelation of Himself even through tragedy and crisis. In all their unexpressed sorrow, there would be a revelation of the **Lord God.**" (David Guzik)

Ezekiel 24:25-27 NKJV—God explains the sign to Ezekiel

²⁵ 'And you, son of man—will it not be in the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that on which they set their minds, their sons and their daughters: ²⁶ on that day one who escapes will come to you to let you hear it with your ears [fulfilled in 33:21]; ²⁷ on that day your mouth will be opened to him who has escaped; you shall speak and no longer be mute. Thus you will be a sign to them, and they shall know that I am the Lord.' "

Ezekiel would be a sign to them in at least two ways. Firstly, everything that he had predicted had come to pass, especially the Babylonian invasion and the destruction of the temple. Secondly, it appears that from the time that God called Ezekiel to be a prophet or watchman he has been mute, except when he had a message from God—as also described in 3:26-27 and 33:21-22. It would only be when the escapee informed Ezekiel of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple that Ezekiel would be able to speak at will again. And he would need to, as there would be a lot of comforting and encouraging to be done as God's people mourned over their sin and repented, turning back to God.

Conclusion

After about 7 years of preaching with seemingly no effect, with the people rejecting God's message and trusting in the presence of the temple building instead, the third and final Babylonian invasion has started. I imagine Ezekiel was a lonely man, with very few friends but many enemies. He has now lost his wife, the desire of his eyes, but still his unwavering trust in is God. May we be like Ezekiel, who was faithful to worship only God in the midst of a perverse generation, and was willing to count the cost of being a disciple of Christ. May we be a faithful watchman like Ezekiel and love those around us enough to warn them of the coming judgement. May we not fear, but find our strength in God.