

Ezekiel 3:20-21—Warning The Righteous and Finishing Well

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: Our responsibility as ambassadors of Christ

Last week we learned that the responsibility given to each believer to be an ambassador for Christ is much more important than we can ever imagine—we are in a war for the souls of men, and therefore the stakes are very high—it is literally a life and death battle.

Last week we covered:

1. **There will be false prophets and false teachers:** God allows them so that people can have free choice to believe the truth or reject it. False teachers will lead people astray, but only because people have already decided to reject the truth (see 2 Timothy 4:3-4 and 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).
2. **God will judge the false prophets and false teachers:** as Christ said in Matthew 18:7, “Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!”
3. **Bible teachers have a stricter judgement than others:** With greater privilege comes greater responsibility (James 3:1).
4. **All believers have responsibility as ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-21):** we all have a responsibility to be in the word, know the word, and be able to share the gospel (see 1 Peter 3:15 and 2 Timothy 2:15). We will be rewarded for our faithfulness and our fruitfulness at the Bema Seat Judgement (see 2 Corinthians 5:9-10).

This week we will cover:

1. Believers are only responsible to warn people, not for the people’s decision
2. Believers also have a responsibility to warn other believers
3. Trials test our faith
4. How we finish the race is more important than how we started (a believer can go off track and not finish well, losing their reward)
5. Does going to church or being religious make me a Christian (the danger of a false conversion)?

Ezekiel 3:20-21 NKJV

²⁰ **“Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. ²¹ Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul.”**

Believers are only responsible to warn people, not for their decision

v 21 **And you will have delivered your soul:** If the people inside the city refused to listen to the watchman blowing the trumpet which warned them of the invading enemy, it was not the fault of the watchman. He had done his job. He had fulfilled his obligation to them. It may have broken his heart to see his countrymen die, but he knew in his heart that had done everything in his power to warn them and give them plenty of time to escape. He was innocent of their blood. He was not responsible for their deaths (also see Ezekiel 33:1-9).

This applies to the spiritual as well. Like the prophets of old, we speak for God when we warn people that, if they don't repent of their sins, then they will remain separated from God for eternity in the Lake of Fire. Also like the prophets of old, ***we are called to faithfully continue warning those around us; our responsibility to warn those around us continues as long as God puts them in our path and/or on our mind.*** The people we warn continue to have free choice to receive or reject the truth that would save them. Because God loves us, He gives us all multiple chances to repent.

Not being responsible for their deaths was a great consolation to the prophets, and it continues to be for us also. Why? Because there will be many who will refuse to heed the warning. We will blow the trumpet, we will share the gospel, we will warn those around us, including our loved ones, friends, and strangers, but many will ignore what we say. Imagine how Jeremiah and Ezekiel felt as almost nobody listened to or believed their message. The discouragement would have been intense, especially as they were faithful to *repeatedly warn* the people day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade, but with little or no visible fruit. That's why God gave them this message of comfort; that because they had continued to warn the people, then the death of the wicked was not their fault.

Application: we (like they) can rest easy with a clear conscience that we have done all we could to love the people around us by warning them of the consequences of sin. Jesus describes the limits of His (and our) responsibility as God's ambassadors clearly in John 15:18-22. Jesus also reveals why people reject the gospel message; it's because they hate God and therefore hate us. Their hate is their own choice.

John 15:18-22 NLT Paraphrase

"If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. ¹⁹ The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. ²⁰ Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you. ²¹ They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the one who sent me. ²² They would not be guilty if I had not come and spoken to them. But now they have no excuse for their sin."

Notice the similarities between John 15:22 and Ezekiel 3:16-21, "They would not be guilty if I had not come and spoken to them. But now they have no excuse for their sin" (John 15:22). Jesus was acting as a watchman, warning the people of their sin. Do you remember what Jesus' overall message was? "*The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil*" (John 7:7). The main thrust of Jesus message was that their works (and ours) are evil, thus the need to repent (turn away from sin and turn to God). Again, nothing changes, the message stays the same.

The responsibility to warn the righteous

Ezekiel 3:20-21 NKJV

²⁰ “Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.
²¹ Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul.”

v 21 **Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin:** This reminds us of *believers’ responsibility to encourage each other* in our walk with God and also to turn each other back to God when we sin.

James 5:19-20 NKJV

Brethren, **if anyone [a believer] among you** wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Galatians 6:1 NKJV

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Hebrews 10:24-25 NKJV

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day [of Jesus’ return] approaching.

As ambassadors, we are not only responsible to reach the lost, but to also encourage those who are already saved to continue walking with the Lord.

Trials test our faith

v 20 **And I lay a stumbling block before him:** The idea here is *not* that God is purposely trying to trip us up and get us to fail. In James 1:2 we read that trials are a test of our faith. God allows things to happen to us so that we can see if we are walking in fellowship with Him (being led/empowered by the Holy Spirit) or not. If we are we will pass the test, if we aren’t, then we won’t. Due to the deceitfulness of our heart (our sinful human nature, Jeremiah 17:9) we never really know if we are truly walking with God unless there are trials along our path. The trials, like an x-ray, are God’s way of diagnosing or revealing my true or hidden motives and affections (see James 1:2-4); they help me to answer a very key question—“am I being led by the Holy Spirit or my sinful human nature?” or, “Have I submitted to (chosen to be led by) the Holy Spirit *or* my sinful human nature” (Galatians 5:16-25, Romans 8:5-6, 12-13).

Galatians 5:16-25 NLT paraphrase

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

¹⁹ **When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear:** sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²² **But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives:** love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there [they have lost their power over us]. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, **let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.**

Romans 8:5-6 NLT paraphrase

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. ⁶ So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

We respond to the trial with repentance or rejoicing. When we pass the trial, we rejoice in our abiding and intimate fellowship with God; we are walking in the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, being controlled and empowered by the Spirit, and thus walk in obedience to God's will and experience the joy of abiding or walking with God (experience eternal life).

Failing the trial reveals that we have been living by or following the desires of our sinful nature. If during the trial we get angry, fall into sin, lie, steal, lust, or simply indulge in worldly pleasures, we are simply reaping what we have sown. If we sow to the flesh (choose to be dominated by our sinful nature), we will reap corruption, decay, and death. *Failing the trial is almost always the fruit or consequence of poor prior choices.* The only solution is to repent and come back under the control of the Holy Spirit (die to self).

Galatians 6:7-8 NLT paraphrase

Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant [reap what you sow]. 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.

Basically, if we are lazy or complacent and are not prioritising our relationship with God over everything else, things can still go well for a while, with very little outward indication of the inward rot or weakness or break in our fellowship with God. But when the trial hits, we soon realise that our spirit is weak, that our fellowship with God is broken, and so we need to repent of whatever the root cause of our sin was and get back into relationship with Christ—I need to die to self! For example, when Peter denied Christ, he had to repent of his tendency to rely on his own strength and how he felt (the root cause), rather than living submitted to and relying on God. His denying the Saviour was the fruit or consequence of his broken fellowship with God. Peter's trial revealed the condition of his heart. Peter then repented of his sin, learning the hard way to rely on God's strength.

How we finish the race is more important than how we started

v ²¹ **His righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered:** “This is the tragic price paid by many **righteous** men and women who fail to finish well. The real good they have **done shall not be remembered**. One sin or a short season of sin can easily wipe out an otherwise good reputation” (David Guzik). This is so true. Think of all the ministries that have been disgraced due to sin. The most recent one I can think of is Ravi Zacharias. Here are couple of quotes from wikipedia about him:

Ravi Zacharias, was an Indian-born Canadian-American Christian evangelical minister and apologist who founded Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM). He was involved in Christian apologetics for a period spanning more than forty years. Zacharias was the author of more than thirty books on Christianity...

Sounds great so far, but if you read on you find this:

On 11 February 2021, RZIM released the full results of its investigation, concluding that there was credible evidence that Zacharias had engaged in sexual misconduct. Accordingly, it was found that Zacharias solicited and received sexually explicit photos from more than 200 women who were in their early twenties until a few months before his death in 2020. According to investigators, Zacharias also used thousands of dollars of ministry funds which had been dedicated to a "humanitarian effort" to pay for massage therapists... [and it gets worse].

Now, while Ravi didn't lose his salvation (assuming he was saved), the great damage he did to the church will definitely affect his reward in heaven. The apostle Paul gives us a stern warning about finishing well so that we are not disqualified from service and we don't lose our reward.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NLT paraphrase

Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! ²⁵ **All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize.** ²⁶ So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. ²⁷ **I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.**

Did you hear what Paul just said, "**Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.**" Paul wasn't saying that he was worried about losing his salvation, but rather that he would be disqualified. But disqualified from what? Ministry and the reward that comes from it.

Let's have a closer look at 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 so we can learn how to run the race and finish well. We'll read it again from the NKJV.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NKJV

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. ²⁵ And everyone who competes for the prize is **temperate (self-controlled) in all things**. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. ²⁶ Therefore **I run** thus: not with uncertainty. Thus **I fight**: not as one who beats the air. ²⁷ But **I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.**

v 26 **I run... I fight**: Paul is referring to sporting events like the Olympic games in Athens and the Isthmian games which were centred in Corinth, so this would be a very familiar concept to the Corinthian believers he was writing to, something that they could all readily relate to.

v 24 **Run in such a way that you may obtain it**: Have you ever seen a half-hearted athlete win an Olympic race? For example:

- Someone who was slack in their training (lack of morning devotions, prayer, bible study, fellowship, evangelism etc)?

- Someone who didn't watch what they ate (a poor spiritual diet—given over to worldly foods—TV, phone, games, drugs, drinking, family, work, pleasure, sport, etc)?
- Someone who didn't get enough sleep (misuse of time)?

What is obvious for winning a physical race should also be obvious for winning the spiritual race. We can't expect to win our eternal race (receive a full reward) if we are not willing to put in the effort and be willing to sacrifice everything else like an Olympic athlete willingly does for their temporary race. Why is it that it seems that so many unbelievers are so committed to their causes; abortion, evolution, career, sin, sports, money, fame, music etc, and are willing to make such huge sacrifices for so little gain, but it seems that so many Christians are not willing to sacrifice for a calling so high, a love so deep, and a reward so great that we can't even begin to understand how wonderful it will be.

1 Corinthians 2:9 NKJV

But as it is written: *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

If we want to receive our full reward, we must **"Run in such a way that you may obtain it."**

v 27 **I discipline my body:** **"Discipline** is a weak translation. The ancient Greek word means "to strike under the eye; to give a black eye." Paul didn't want his body to lord it over his entire being" (David Guzik).

v 27 **Bring it into subjection:** This "literally means to lead about as a slave. Paul made sure that his body was the servant, and his inner man was the master. The desires of his body were not going to rule over his entire self" (David Guzik).

So disciplining our bodies and bringing them into subjection is simply keeping them under the control of the Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit is powerful enough to rule over our bodily appetites and desires. Remember what we just read in Galatians 5:16, *"So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves."*

v 27 **Disqualified:** "Signifies such a person as the ... *judges of the games, reject as not having deserved the prize.* So Paul himself might be rejected by the great Judge; and to *prevent* this, he *ran*, he *contended*, he *denied himself*, and *brought his body into subjection* to his spirit, and had his spirit governed by the Spirit of God." (Adam Clarke)

Again, this disqualification doesn't refer to a loss of salvation, but rather a loss of reward. *The Greek athlete would not lose his citizenship if he was disqualified from the race, but he would lose his prize, his reward.*

Relating this back to Ravi, consider the warnings and promises given in:

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 NKJV

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; **but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able**, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

James 1:14-16 NKJV

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own **desires and enticed**.
¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to **sin**; and **sin**, when it is full-grown, brings forth **death**. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

Remember that we all have the potential to fall into sin like Ravi. It doesn't take much to start the process leading to disqualification. James 1:14-16 gives the three steps:

1. **A thought/desire/enticement**—only a thought, but when the desire or thought is not dealt with or taken captive (2 Corinthians 10:3-6) it leads (**gives brith**) to:
2. **Sin (the acting out of the desire)**—our thoughts become our actions, which become our lifestyle, and we end up in bondage to the sin. This then leads to:
3. **Death**—the inevitable and tragic consequence of the sin.

I like the weed analogy. I want to prepare my garden so I can grow tomatoes. So I get rid of all the big weeds which are easily seen and easy to pull up. But the little ones are so fiddly and difficult to pull up, and I think that because they are only small that they won't affect the tomatoes, therefore, I leave them there. So I plant my tomatoes, with the little weeds still growing. It still looks nice. The tomato seedlings are much bigger than the little weeds I left behind, and I think that I'm so clever because I saved myself all that hard work of pulling out those pesky little weeds.

But then what happens? The little weeds inevitably grow into big weeds and soon I can't see the tomato plants. My garden is totally overgrown with weeds and there are no tomatoes—it is completely unfruitful.

The same is true with our own lives. We see the big sins and work hard to clean up our act and we have success in getting rid of the obvious things. For example, if I was a thief stealing money from people, I could work on not stealing money, and in the short term be successful. I make myself accountable, set guidelines on where I can be, and purpose not be around money. But I allow my covetous thoughts to remain, as well as some thieving habits. Those pesky thoughts about wanting more money are so hard to control, so difficult to take captive, that I choose to leave them there (I dwell on them)—hey, if I can't do it, at least I can get pleasure from thinking about doing it. And stealing little things like biscuits and chocolate from home, well... that doesn't matter.

What's happened? I've just made myself God. I've determined what level of goodness is acceptable, and that's the level I choose to live at. I justify my behaviour and thoughts by saying things like, "well I'm so much better than I was before. No-one will know about these other things, these covetous thoughts and minor thefts. Those things will be okay. I can live with them. I can control them." **I have just justified my sin.**

But, am I fully submitted to God? No! I'm not walking in the Spirit or being led and empowered by the Spirit, rather, I am still being dominated by my sinful nature. Even though there was positive outward change, the change wasn't internal, only external. There was no surrender of my will to God. If I was honest, I would admit that I was only trying to avoid the painful and public consequences of my sin of stealing money from people (my true motive). However, in not dealing with the root issue—my desires—I end up humiliated anyway (guilty of stealing). All I did was prolong the inevitable.

So what happened? *The little weeds I was too lazy to pull up killed me.* Those little weeds became big weeds—little sins will become big sins if not taken care of. The problems I had before will come back because the weeds I refused to pull out, the sins I refused to repent of and instead justified as being okay and controllable—they will ultimately destroy me.

The moral of the story is that I need to deal drastically with sin. It's **all** got to go. If I have a weakness in any area of my life, I need to cut off anything that will cause me to sin in that area, including any thoughts. We can apply what Jesus said to unbelievers about dealing drastically with sin to us as believers. We could say, "if something causes you to sin, cut it off, get rid of it completely so you don't lose your reward."

Matthew 5:30 NKJV

And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Consider the following verses from Psalm 119 which shows what wholehearted obedience looks like.

Psalm 119:1-6 NLT paraphrase

- 1 Joyful are people *of integrity [blameless]*,
who follow the instructions of the Lord.
- 2 Joyful are those who obey his laws
and **search for him with all their hearts.**
- 3 *They do not compromise with evil,*
and they walk only in his paths.
- 4 You have charged us
to keep your commandments carefully.
- 5 Oh, that my actions would consistently
reflect your decrees!
- 6 **Then I will not be ashamed**
when I compare my life with your commands.

The difference between a **cold, lukewarm, self-reliant,** and **hot** believer is:

- **Cold** (backslidden)—they sin wilfully even though it is breaking their fellowship with God. They are completely unrepentant and aren't even trying to change (e.g. the prodigal son and the initially unrepentant man in Corinth who was temporarily excommunicated because of his sexual sin). They are completely backslidden but can be restored. *Their question is, "how much sin can I enjoy?"*
- **Lukewarm** (compromising)—this believer wonders about how much sin can I get away with (justify) while still appearing Christian to those around them and appeasing their own conscience (I must be pretty good because I don't do this and that like so and so does). In reality, they are in a conundrum; they want to keep doing the sin, but at the same time they don't like the consequences of the sin and so will not fully indulge in the sin. They will never be satisfied. King Saul and King Solomon would be a good examples. They didn't pull all the weeds out and so finished poorly. *Their question is, "how much sin can I get away with?"*
- **Self-reliant** (not fully submitted)—This believer sees how sinful they really are, knows what is right, and seeks to do what is right, *but they try to overcome the sin by their own strength.* Like when Peter denied Jesus, they haven't yet come to the realisation that "I can't but God can" (see Philippians 4:13, John 15:5). They are still relying on their own strength, resources, smarts etc. There comes a painful moment for all believers when they finally give up trying to live the Christian life on their own strength and finally, or more fully, surrender to God. This is called dying to self, and it's only once this happens that we can truly walk by faith. *Their question is, "How can I overcome this sin?"*

- **Hot**—The fully repentant believer is fully submitted to and completely dependant on God, and is therefore fully enabled by God to deal with the sin, even the desire for the sin. “Therefore submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Like Jesus in the garden, they pray earnestly for God’s will to be done in their lives. These believers are wholeheartedly seeking God, they are all in. *Their question is, “How pure and holy can I be so I can enjoy a more intimate walk with God.”*

Again, remember these sobering words from Ezekiel about the righteous, “**“When a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity... his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered.”** We don’t want to be one of those who ends badly. Rather, we want to hear the words from Jesus, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord”

Matthew 25:21 NKJV

His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

Not being faithful to deal with and repent of sin as a believer will cost us our eternal reward. ***We can enjoy sin here, or enjoy our reward there, but we can’t do both.*** The choice is ours. We can fool those around us with our half hearted repentance, but we can’t fool God; we will reap what we sow. Not dealing wholeheartedly with our sin is like being lukewarm.

Does going to church or being religious make you a Christian?

Many people would answer “yes” to this question. Why? Here are some reasons: they made a profession of faith at a rally or church, go to church, consider themselves to be morally good people (compared to some others who do much “worse” sins), pray, read the Bible regularly, and participate in the church ministries and activities. Also, there are many people who say, “I’m going to heaven because I was baptised as a baby,” or, “I’m a member of such and such a church.”

Did you realise that the people in Ezekiel’s day that he was speaking to were the same: they worshipped at the temple, read the Scriptures regularly, prayed, sang the songs at the temple, participated in the various feasts and other religious activities, wore the right clothes, spoke the right words, and if you said something against their precious temple you would probably end up dead. They also considered themselves to be so much better and more righteous than all the other “pagan” nations. Their whole culture revolved around the temple and the various services; they were very religious. But this is how God described them:

Isaiah 29:13 NKJV

Therefore the Lord said:

“Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths

And honour Me with their lips,

But have removed their hearts far from Me,

And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,

Isaiah 29:13 NLT

And so the Lord says,

“These people say they are mine.

They honour me with their lips,

but their hearts are far from me.

And their worship of me

is nothing but man-made rules learned by rote.

Jesus said the same thing about the nation of Israel in His day:

Mark 7:6-7 NKJV

He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. ⁷ **And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**’

This is so sad. The Jews really thought that they were good people. At least in Jesus’ day, it was believed that all Jews would go to heaven, and all gentile “dogs” would go to hell. They were faithfully going to the temple, giving money, offering sacrifices, singing, praying, fasting, etc, but their hearts were wicked. In reality, everything they did for God was only because of tradition and ritual. As a result, the rest of their lives was lived solely for themselves, including worshipping idols, oppressing people, sexual sins, murder of infants, and the like. Their spiritual pride had blinded them to their sin, as it does people today. *A person who says they believe in God but has never repented (turned from sin and turned to God) is a false convert.*

Conclusion

1. **Believers are only responsible to warn people, not for the people’s decision:** we can’t help it if they choose to hate God.
2. **Believers also have a responsibility to warn other believers:** it is our Christian duty to help each other stay on the straight and narrow.
3. **God sends trials test our faith;** they are like an x-ray of the soul.
4. **How we finish the race is more important than how we started:** a believer can go off track and not finish well, losing their reward. I pray that we will all seek God with our whole heart and finish well so we will receive a full reward. We need a heavenly perspective.

2 John 8 NKJV

“Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.”

5. **False converts:** not everyone who says they are saved are actually saved. As it was then, so it is now. There are still many religious hypocrites, saying one thing, but living another; professing to follow God, but not actually loving God. There was no repentance, therefore there is no relationship; their hearts are hardened against God because of their love of sin. Thus why Jesus was so direct with the people as He testified that their works were evil. Thus why Ezekiel’s message to the people was so direct as he told them, “repent or die.” Thus why our message today must be just as pointed and direct—nothing has changed in the hearts of men—we all need to be woken up to the reality and consequences of sin.

Ezekiel 3:20-21 NKJV

²⁰ **“Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.**
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