

Ezekiel 3:22-4:17—The Siege And Destruction Of Jerusalem Portrayed

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.

This week we will learn about:

1. *Walking by faith or by sight:* Keeping my eyes on God and not my circumstances.
2. *Being enabled for service by the Holy Spirit:* I can't but God can.
3. *Ezekiel's difficult calling:* Serving God will require great sacrifice.
4. *Ezekiel's first action sermon:* The siege of Jerusalem portrayed

Prophecy By Drama

Ezekiel, like the other prophets, didn't only speak God's messages, but he also acted them out. The people's hearts were hard, so God went to extreme measures to try to get their attention (God does the same with us today). Life would become very difficult for Ezekiel as he would have to live out what it would be like for the people in Jerusalem when they were under siege, suffering by going hungry and thirsty for a long period of time. He also suffered the hatred of his countrymen.

Big God, Little Problems, or, Little God, Big Problems

(Walking by faith or by sight)

Ezekiel 3:22-23 NKJV

Then the hand of the Lord was upon me there, and He said to me, "Arise, go out into the plain, and there I shall talk with you."

²³ So I arose and went out into the plain, and behold, the glory of the Lord stood there, like the glory which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face.

This is the third time (also see Ezekiel 1:3 and 3:14) that God revealed Himself to Ezekiel with this glorious, majestic, and powerful vision of God's glory on His throne/chariot. Once again, Ezekiel had to get ready to hear and receive God's word.

"Although this is the third time he sees the *kabod* [the physical presence or glory of the Lord], the sight still catches him by surprise and overwhelms him with awe. His relationship with God never becomes familiar or casual—even a commissioned and authorised spokesman must prostrate himself in the presence of God." (Block)

Application: *Do I still come into God's presence day by day with awe and reverence, or am I bored and unimpressed? While I may or may not be physically prostrate before Him, my attitude towards God is important. Do I see myself as small, weak, and helpless before God, and therefore seek His help and choose to live in complete dependance upon Him? Or, have I lost my appreciation of the greatness and majesty of God and therefore try to solve my problems using my own strength. Remember that the more I draw near to God, the smaller my problems appear. This is why it is so important that I choose to draw near to God by allowing God to reveal Himself to me as I prayerfully read the Word of God each morning.*

The opposite is also true, the less I choose to draw near to God (the more distant I choose to be from God), then the bigger my problems appear to me and the easier it is for me to sin. A problem or temptation that today maybe only an annoyance, can tomorrow overwhelm me, if I lose my divine perspective. Therefore, I can use how I perceive my problems and trials in life as a measure of how close I am to God. The closer I am walking with God, and therefore the more I am depending on God, then the more my fear and despair is replaced by courage, rejoicing, and hope. Why? Because my hope is in God, and God can be trusted to never let me down. King David's hope-filled and victorious prayers in the midst of his trials show how our perspective can change when we choose to draw near to God.

Psalm 39:7 NKJV

And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.

Psalm 39:7 NLT

And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you.

To wait on the Lord is to trust in the Lord. David here asks an important question—in whom or in what am I putting my hope or my trust? His answer, only in God!

Psalm 34:1-10, 17-19 NKJV

1 I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

2 My soul shall make its boast in the Lord;
The humble shall hear of it and be glad.

3 Oh, magnify the Lord with me,
And let us exalt His name together.

4 I sought the Lord, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.

5 They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces were not ashamed.

6 This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him,
And saved him out of all his troubles.

7 The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him,
And delivers them.

8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good;
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

9 Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints!
There is no want to those who fear Him.

10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger;
But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.

17 The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears,
And delivers them out of all their troubles.

18 The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
But the Lord delivers him out of them all.

Can you see how choosing to draw near to God and enjoy deep and abiding fellowship with Him leads to amazing confidence and joy. But why is this?

The difficulty of the task is measured by the agent doing the work (Chuck Smith)

Therefore, If God is the one doing the work, is there any task or problem or temptation that is actually difficult or big (from God's perspective)?

Think of it this way. If I have to move a one tonne concrete block by myself, I'm going to be dreading the task, despairing even. However, if I use a crane, the task becomes as easy as moving a couple of levers.

The point is this: if I'm distant from God, choosing to neglect my walk with Him by not reading and obeying His Word, then I will forget how powerful and holy He is; God becomes small in my perspective and my problems appear insurmountable, everyday tasks become difficult and burdensome, and sin becomes so much more attractive.

It's like David fighting Goliath. If David looked at Goliath, then he would have been like the rest of the Israelite army, shaking in their boots. The Israelite army's spiritual perspective was that Goliath was big and God was small; but David's was the opposite. Because David was walking in close fellowship with God he had a different perspective of God and therefore also of Goliath. He was walking by faith (aware of the presence of the unseen God) and not by sight (what we see around us). Here is part of the account:

1 Samuel 17:45-47 NLT paraphrase

David replied to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ **Today the Lord will conquer you**, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and **the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel!** ⁴⁷ **And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues His people, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord's battle**, and He will give you to us!"

We get three points from this passage:

1. The basis for our hope and confidence—It's His battle, not mine. "**Today the Lord will conquer you... This is the Lord's battle.**" This is the key to resting in the Lord. God allowed the circumstance, He's in control, so trust Him for the victory.
2. The motive of our hope and confidence—all glory to God. "...**the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel!** ⁴⁷ **And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues His people**" This is the motive we should have; to bring glory to God and not ourselves.
3. The Method of our hope and confidence—God's way using God's resources. "... *but not with sword and spear.*" This is a spiritual battle fought with spiritual weapons (see Ephesians 6:10-13).

Also consider the account of Elisha and his servant:

2 Kings 6:11-17 NLT paraphrase

The king of Aram [Syria] became very upset over this. He called his officers together and demanded, "Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?"

¹² "It's not us, my lord the king," one of the officers replied. "Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!"

¹³ "Go and find out where he is," the king commanded, "so I can send troops to seize him."

And the report came back: "Elisha is at Dothan." ¹⁴ So one night the king of Aram [Syria] sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city.

15 *When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. “Oh, sir, what will we do now?” the young man cried to Elisha.* [the human perspective—panic/fear].

16 “Don’t be afraid!” Elisha told him. “For there are more on our side than on theirs!” [The divine perspective—calm assurance of God’s greatness]

17 Then Elisha prayed, “O Lord, open his eyes and let him see!” The Lord opened the young man’s eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire [a change of perspective—the servant no longer feared].

Psalm 13 also illustrates a change of perspective, from ourselves to God, that King David experienced. I’ll just highlight the main points:

Psalm 13 (selected verses) NKJV

v 2 **How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?** [The Human perspective—depressing self talk, self-focused, having a “pity party”]

v 3 Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; **Enlighten my eyes,** [A change in perspective—David looks to God asks God to help him shift his focus from himself to God.]

v 5-6 But I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. **6 I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me.** [The Divine Perspective—trusting and hoping in God in the present as he chooses to remember past deliverances]

Again, notice the two different perspectives, human and divine, and also the change in perspective when our eyes are opened. If I am walking by sight (focused on my circumstances and emotions), then the problems and trials of this world will easily overwhelm me, just like they did the Israelite army, Elisha’s servant, and King David (initially in Psalm 13). However, if we have our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (see Hebrews 12:2), then our perspective will be so very different. With God as the agent doing the work, the problems don’t even seem like problems any more. Why? *For God, everything is easy!*

As God had to remind many of His servants in the past when they were overwhelmed and started complaining, so He reminds us today—“**Is there anything too hard for the Lord**” (examples: Abraham—Genesis 18:14, Moses—Numbers 11:23, Jeremiah—Jeremiah 32:27, Mary—Luke 1:37). Like them, all we need is a change of perspective. Now we will see why Ezekiel needed to have the divine perspective; to prepare him for the extraordinarily difficult trial he was about to go through. God reveals Himself to us, not so we can go, “wow, wasn’t that a great experience,” but so we will be prepared for the coming trial and can overcome any sin.

Enabled By The Holy Spirit = Enabled By God

Ezekiel 3:24-27 NKJV

Then the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet, and spoke with me and said to me: “Go, shut yourself inside your house. ²⁵ And you, O son of man, surely they will put ropes on you and bind you with them, so that you cannot go out among them. ²⁶ I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall

be mute and not be one to rebuke them, for they are a rebellious house. ²⁷ **But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.'** He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house.

The Holy spirit is God

v 24, 27 **Then the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet, and spoke with me and said to me... But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God':** Here we see a clear statement that the Holy Spirit is God. Previously it was Jesus speaking to Ezekiel from the throne above the wheels, with the Spirit lifting Ezekiel up. But now the Spirit also speaks to and instructs Ezekiel. It would be the Holy Spirit coming upon or entering Ezekiel who would give Him the words to speak, and once Ezekiel had finished speaking, he was to say, "Thus says the Lord God," (proof the Holy Spirit is also God).

The Holy Spirit gives us the words to speak

v 26-27 **I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be mute and not be one to rebuke them, for they are a rebellious house** ²⁷ **But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God:** "Ezekiel would be rendered speechless until God Himself opened his mouth. Wouldn't that be wonderful if that were true of us? We talk about needing the power of the Holy Spirit to speak the Word of God. But sometimes we need the power of the Holy Spirit to keep us quiet" (Jon Courson). There is a lot of wisdom here, I often get myself into trouble by speaking when I shouldn't.

This is the same for the New Testament. New Testament believers all have the Holy Spirit *in* them, but need to be equipped and empowered for ministry by the Holy Spirit *upon* them (also see Acts 1:8, Ch2, 4:31). Remember the promise in:

Mark 13:11 NKJV

But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

Application: How many get nervous when presented with the opportunity to witness to somebody? We all do. We wouldn't be human if we didn't. Our sinful nature is working overtime, screaming in our heads, "Don't talk to them, they'll eat you alive and spit out the bones." But we don't have to listen to that self-talk. Instead, we can choose to listen to the Holy Spirit and trust His promise to give us the words to speak. Yes, we do need to know what the Word of God teaches concerning the gospel because the Spirit can only work with or bring to remembrance what we have read previously in the Bible (John 14:26). However, once we have studied the Gospel, it's just a matter of being willing to overcome our fear by stepping out in faith and being willing to start talking. Consider Ezekiel. Although he had studied the Scriptures in his training to be a priest, yet he only spoke what God the Holy Spirit told him to speak.

The Difficulty Of Ezekiel's Calling

v 24 **Go, shut yourself inside your house:** Here we see the Holy Spirit telling Ezekiel to self-isolate for an indefinite period of time. It is not uncommon to feel lonely in ministry as many will either reject us, misunderstand us, disagree with us, or just simply in such a bad place that they can't show their appreciation to us as God begins to heal them. **We need to be solid/mature in our relationship with God before we can help others.**

v 25 **And you, O son of man, surely they will put ropes on you and bind you with them, so that you cannot go out among them:** Jesus was crucified because people didn't like His message; Ezekiel was bound with ropes. The world will do what it can to silence the witness of believers, but God has the final say. Tertullian, an early (~155 - ~255 AD) African church father familiar with persecution famously said:

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church

It's not the message that most of us like to hear, but the church only really grows when it is persecuted. *We should see persecution as an opportunity, not something to avoid.* Why? Because when we are persecuted we are not interested in or attracted by the things of the world—instead we are crying out to God for help. As an example, when I'm sick, I can't stand even the thought of chocolate, but when I'm well, I'm almost a slave to it. Isn't it amazing how my fleshly appetites are diminished when I'm suffering!

v 27 **For they are a rebellious house:** “**A rebellious house**”, literally a house of rebellion, a nation that is characterised by rebellion. This characterises mankind. None of us seek God (Romans 3:1). Ezekiel wasn't sent to people who would appreciate him, thank him for delivering God's message to them, and then all genuinely repent and follow God. The opposite was true, and so it is for us today. Jesus said to His disciples in His day:

Matthew 10:16-17a NKJV

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. ¹⁷ But beware of men...”

v 27 **He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse:** Here we see God's grace as He gives every person a free choice to either hear or refuse, regardless of how 'good' or 'bad' they are. The reality is that none of us deserve this opportunity, but God in His great love desires all men to be saved:

1 Timothy 2:3-6 NLT paraphrase

This is good and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ **who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.** ⁵ For, there is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. ⁶ **He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone.** This is the message God gave to the world at just the right time.

v 27 **He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse:** We also see that the responsibility is on the hearer to respond to the truth as God gives them light.

“The two Hebrew words, *hassomea yisma*, lit. ‘let the hearer hear’, or ‘he who hears will hear’ (27), are the prototype for our Lord's favourite formula: ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear’ ... *The hearer's response is dictated by his inner being.*” (Taylor)

What does this mean, “*The hearer's response is dictated by his inner being?*” The soft or humble heart will hear and respond; the hard or proud heart will not. The purpose of the law is to “plough up the hard ground of our hearts” so that they become receptive to the good news of the gospel. This is why we need to keep reminding people of their sin and their need for repentance. We will find that God, through Ezekiel, constantly reminded the Israelites of their sins, and the result was repentance, though it came years later. God is very patient with people, so we must be also. We must continue to warn people of the consequences of their sin and their need for repentance.

Ezekiel 4—The Siege of Jerusalem Portrayed

“Tens of thousands of Jews were now in the city of Babylon. During this time, false prophets began to come on the scene, saying that the Jews’ stay in Babylon would be short, that they would be back in Jerusalem in no time at all. So God sent Ezekiel to tell the people that they would be in Babylon for a long time, that He had much work to do in their lives, and that Jerusalem would soon be destroyed [by the Babylonians], as indeed it was in 586 b.c.

That was Ezekiel’s message, but he was to give it in a most unusual way, for God had rendered him speechless. Therefore, He would use Ezekiel to give a message not by speaking but by acting. Having turned a deaf ear to His message, God would get the attention of His people in a different way...” (Jon Courson).

Ezekiel is not the first prophet to be called to act out his message. Isaiah was told to wear sackcloth and then walk around naked (see Isaiah 20:2-3). Jeremiah also gave action sermons (Jeremiah 13:1-7).

Ezekiel 4:1-2 NKJV (Drawing the siege)

“You also, son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem. ² Lay siege against it, build a siege wall against it, and heap up a mound against it; set camps against it also, and place battering rams against it all around.

God is here telling Ezekiel to take would be similar today to a chalkboard or whiteboard and draw the city of Jerusalem. He was also to draw or build the surrounding army with their battering rams and siege walls. “The tile [clay tablet] mentioned in the text was a tablet of soft clay, baked to make it durable, such as the Babylonians used for writing purposes” (Feinberg).

Ezekiel 4:3 NKJV (The iron plate symbolising separation from God)

³ Moreover take for yourself an iron plate, and set it as an iron wall between you and the city. Set your face against it, and it shall be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it. This will be a sign to the house of Israel.

Once Ezekiel had finished drawing the siege of Jerusalem on his clay tablet, he was to set an iron plate between the tablet and himself.

Wiersbe comments, “[The iron plate] was the kind of utensil that the priests used in the temple for preparing some of the offerings (Leviticus 2:5; 6:21; 7:9). The iron griddle symbolised the wall that stood between God and the sinful Jewish nation so that He could no longer look on them with approval and blessing.”

Thus the **sign to the house of Israel** was that God was not going to intervene and rescue the people, as was being taught by the false prophets and believed by the majority of the people. Their sin had separated them from God (Isaiah 59:2). As James 1:5 says, “sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

As we learned previously, the message of the false prophets is that we can continue to live life for ourselves, without having to repent, and without there being consequences for our rebellion (see Jeremiah 23). But the Bible clearly teaches that we must not be deceived into thinking that we will not reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7-8).

Ezekiel 4:4-6 NKJV (Forgiveness is available)

4 “Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity [sin] of the house of Israel upon it. According to the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity [sin]. 5 For I have laid on you the years of their iniquity [sin], according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days; so you shall bear the iniquity [sin] of the house of Israel. 6 And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity [sin] of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year.

Ezekiel was to lie on his left side for 390 days and then his right side for 40 days, a total of 430 days lying on his side, most of the day, every day. Just imagine laying on your side for approximately one year and three months next to your chalkboard siege drawing. Try to imagine what people would be saying to you, “are you nuts, insane, out of your mind?” That’s what Jesus’ family thought of Him (see Mark 3:21).

But why did God tell Ezekiel to do this? To **bear their iniquity (sin)** (v 4). In the midst of judgement, God is giving this message of forgiveness; if only they would be willing to repent and receive God’s forgiveness. Do you remember who bore our iniquity or sin?

Isaiah 53:6 NKJV

**6 All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity [sin] of us all.**

Remember that it pains God to discipline His children, and even more so to have to judge the unrepentant. Part of the message that God will give the nation of Israel is:

Ezekiel 33:11 NKJV

Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way [repent] and live. Turn [repent], turn [repent] from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’

The fact is that nobody needs to go to Hell, which the Bible tells us was created for the devil and his fallen angels. Nobody needs to be judged for their sin, because Jesus paid the full price for the sins of all people (1 John 2:2). Like the unrepentant Jews of Ezekiel’s day, they did not have to be judged, but by refusing to repent of their sins and turn to God, they were choosing judgement over forgiveness. The same is true for the majority of people in the world today. Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14 that few will choose to enter the narrow gate and difficult path that leads to life, and instead will choose the wide gate and the broad and easy way that leads to destruction.

Ezekiel 4:7-8 NKJV (God’s powerful arm and certain judgement)

7 “Therefore you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem; your arm shall be uncovered, and you shall prophesy against it. 8 And surely I will restrain you so that you cannot turn from one side to another till you have ended the days of your siege.

“In this acted out prophecy, Ezekiel demonstrated that the strong arm of God’s judgment against Jerusalem would be active and unrestrained” (David Guzik). Often God’s arm is used as a symbol of His strength and power (Numbers 11:23, Isaiah 50:2, 59:1). Often it is used as a symbol of God’s strength and power to save, but here it is used as a symbol of His strength and power to judge.

Not being able to **turn from one side to the other** pictures the helplessness of the nation when under siege—there would be no escape. However, Ezekiel wouldn't have to lie like that all day and night, as he also had instructions to prepare food each day, which would include making a fire and cooking his grain and lentil cakes using cow dung.

Ezekiel 4:9-11 NKJV (Acting out/living the famine that would result from the siege)

⁹ “Also take for yourself wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt; put them into one vessel, and make bread of them for yourself. During the number of days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days, you shall eat it. ¹⁰ And your food which you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from time to time you shall eat it. ¹¹ You shall also drink water by measure, one-sixth of a hin; from time to time you shall drink.

v 9 **Wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt:** “The unusual bread was an acted-out prediction of life during siege, when anything and everything that could be eaten was. It was also carefully measured out (**by weight, twenty shekels a day**) as bread (and water) would be carefully weighed and rationed during siege” (David Guzik).

“In times of scarcity, it is customary in all countries to mix several kinds of coarser grain with the finer, to make it last the longer.” (Adam Clarke)

v 10 **And your food which you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day:** A shekel was about 11.4 grams. So 20 shekels would be about 228g of this coarse bread each day. That's not much, less than one quarter of a kilogram.

v 10 **You shall also drink water by measure, one-sixth of a hin:** This would be 0.61 litres or 610 mLs. This is like one 600 mL bottle of water a day.

“Scarce enough to keep the man alive. Such proportions of bread and water rather fed death than the man” (Poole). Ezekiel was living out the coming siege as a demonstration of coming events. I imagine that he would have lost a lot of weight over the time.

Ezekiel 4:12-15 NKJV (What life would be like for those in the siege and afterward)

¹² And you shall eat it as barley cakes; and bake it using fuel of human waste in their sight.”

¹³ Then the Lord said, “So shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, where I will drive them.”

¹⁴ So I said, “Ah, Lord God! Indeed I have never defiled myself from my youth till now; I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has abominable flesh ever come into my mouth.”

¹⁵ Then He said to me, “See, I am giving you cow dung instead of human waste, and you shall prepare your bread over it.”

Imagine being a Jew but not be able to keep the Jewish dietary laws. “In this Ezekiel demonstrated not only the desperation of siege, but also the misery of the Jewish exiles **among the Gentiles**, where care for keeping kosher food and its preparation were impossible”(David Guzik).

It's important to remember that God was not telling Ezekiel to disobey the law of Moses. “There is no recorded prohibition in the *kashrut* (‘kosher’) laws of the Torah regarding the use of human excrement for fuel” (Vawter and Hoppe).

“Dried animal dung was used as fuel in the east, and still is, and it was not regarded as ritually, unclean. However, in the siege all cattle would be killed for food, so only human excrement would be available for fuel” (Wright). Despite this the Jews didn’t usually cook their food using animal dung and definitely not human excrement.

v 12 **In their sight:** Day by day, Ezekiel was acting out and no doubt explaining what this meant as he did it. The whole point was so that the people would hear the message and tell others about it.

v 14 **So I said, “Ah, Lord God! Indeed I have never defiled myself:**

Ezekiel objected to the command to prepare his food using fire fuelled by human waste. Even using cow dung went against Jewish customs (not law), and was disgusting (imagine the smell). In response to Ezekiel’s complaint and revulsion, God allows Ezekiel to use cow dung to cook with instead. However, of course, the people in the siege in Jerusalem, and those led away afterward, would not have the luxury of cooking with cow dung, but instead would have to collect their own waste and use human excrement to cook with.

Application: Ezekiel felt free to go to God and voice his concerns. We are free to do as well. We may feel like what God is asking of us is too much. Share your concerns with God, remembering that He is for us and not against us (see Romans 8:31, 1 John 4:16). Moses, David, Jeremiah, and others all felt overwhelmed at times (see Exodus 17:4).

Psalm 62:8 NKJV

Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.

Ezekiel 4:16-17 NKJV (Do not be deceived—sin has consequences)

16 Moreover He said to me, “Son of man, surely I will cut off the supply of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and shall drink water by measure and with dread, 17 that they may lack bread and water, and be dismayed with one another, and waste away because of their iniquity [sin].

This was the judgement that was coming upon those unrepentant Jews who remained in Jerusalem because of their sin. Remember the parable of the good and bad figs in Jeremiah 24. God had already removed the righteous people from Jerusalem by way of the previous two exiles (people like Daniel and Ezekiel). This principal of God not judging the righteous with the wicked (Genesis 18:25) is seen all through the bible: Lot, Noah, and the church (the rapture), all all spared judgement. The people remaining in Jerusalem were completely unrepentant and fully deserving of Judgement—yet God in His mercy still had Jeremiah stay behind to continue to warn them. The coming judgement is further described in the next chapter.

Conclusion

1. When we walk by faith and not by sight, we will see God as bigger than our problems and trials and we won’t have to fear. It’s about having the right perspective.
2. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to be witnesses for Christ. He will give us the words to speak, though we need to first study the Word to get them into our hearts.
3. Sharing the message will never be easy and will always require a lot of sacrifice. Remember that our highest motive and greatest satisfaction is to bring glory to God.