

## The Christian's Calling in America Today

Ezekiel 2:1-3:4

Today's Scripture Reading leads us to consider who is responsible for the moral and ethical decay that is occurring in America today. As sinful human beings we always want to blame somebody else – the President, Congress, the Supreme Court, or one of the political parties. The truth God's Word presents is that the spiritual decay found in our land has more to do with Christians than anyone else. We look at this today as we consider the Christian's calling in America.

A Christian is called to go and speak God's Truth. Here we reflect upon God's words to Ezekiel, when He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites.... You must speak My words to them.... Go and speak to the house of Israel."

There are a couple of truths for us to consider here. First, God has not called us to let people know we are here and let them know they are welcome if they come. By this we are not suggesting that as individual Christians it is wrong for us to invite people to take part in our worship services or some other aspect of our ministry. The problem is that Christians think their mission from the Lord is fulfilled if they let the community know the times of worship services, Sunday school and Bible class. No wonder America is in trouble today. Our calling is not to wait for some interested person to enter the doors of our facilities. Our calling is to go out into the community in which we live and bring God's Word to them.

We are to be taking active steps to go into people's homes and to enter people's lives. We are not to passively sit back and wait for them to come to us.

Second, our calling from God is to go out and tell others about God's Truth. Our calling is not to make a sales pitch for our congregation. Sure we can share with other people aspects of our ministry that may be helpful to them, but above all else we are to deliver the message of God's Word. We are to share with people the whole counsel of God. We are to speak with them about God's Law that shows us our sin and our inability to save ourselves. We are to share with them God's Gospel, pointing them to the Savior Who bore the sins of all people on Calvary's cross. We are to speak of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ and the certainty of a place in heaven through faith in the resurrected Savior. The Lord has clearly told us: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). The people of America don't need to hear our opinions on matters; they need to hear God's voice through the sharing of His Word.

This leads to the second major point of today's text. A Christian's calling results from man's rebellious nature. God said to Ezekiel: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against Me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn."

The people at Ezekiel's time were a rebellious people who had turned their

backs on God and His Word. They had chosen to do things according to their liking rather than in accordance with God's will. They ignored the Divine direction and wisdom God's Word provided.

This situation very much describes our nation today. Americans are forsaking the Lord and His Word. Many in our land are questioning the reality and validity of the Christian faith. We are surrounded by murders, thefts, rapes, and other hideous crimes. Laws in our land are being changed to ignore God's concept of marriage and make same sex marriages an acceptable arrangement. Laws in our land are taking the God-given gift of human life and saying this life can be terminated so long as it is still partially in a mother's womb. These are sins against a holy and just God, but who in America cares?

The nation is described as "obstinate and stubborn." Obstinate means that people have lost their shame. I remember years ago it was frowned upon when two people of the opposite sex lived together. Today people think that this is a good way to see if people are really compatible for marriage. The shame of sin is lost in America, and stubbornness prevails. Today people claim to have their own rights and no one else has the right to tell them what to do, especially God.

God warns us in this text that this attitude prevalent in American society is not to become the attitude of Christians. God says in our text: "Do not rebel like that rebellious house: open your mouth and eat what I give you."

This leads to the third major point of today's text. A Christian is equipped for his calling through faithfully studying God's Word. As God is speaking to

Ezekiel, He says: "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll: then go and speak to the house of Israel.... Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." These symbolic words are interpreted in Ezekiel 3:10, where God says: "Son of man, listen carefully and take to heart all the words I speak to you."

When we look at America today and see her principles wavering farther and farther away from the biblical principles upon which the early forefathers founded this country, who is to blame? While every American is responsible for this, the greatest blame rests with those who call themselves Christians but are not feeding on God Word and going forth to bring that Word to our nation. The Lord said, "To whom much is given, of him much will be required" (Luke 12:48). In America today less than 40% of people calling themselves Christians are attending church to hear God's Word. In America today approximately 18% of all people who call themselves Christians are studying God's Word with other Christians. God told Ezekiel that to bring God's Truth to a rebellious nation he was first need to feed upon God's Word himself in order that he could deliver the Word of God to a rebellious nation. America is in a continuous spiral away from God because the very people who claim that the bible is God's Word are not consuming it. We must feed upon the Bible to profit from it. When our Bibles stay in amazingly good condition because of a lack of use, know that the souls of people and the heart of a nation are in the process of spiritual destruction. Just as physical food is consumed to give health and life to our bodies, so consuming

God's Word brings about spiritual nourishment and strength. Let us renew our commitment to hear, read, and study God's Word, and let us bring that Word of God to the people of this land.

This leads to the fourth major point that God brings forth from today's text. Christians who are fulfilling their calling are reminded of three things. First, sharing God's Word will not always change lives.

We as Christians are reluctant to share God's Word because in part we are afraid of failure. What the Lord clearly reveals to us in our text is that some people will listen to God's Word and others will not. Our sharing of God's Word will not always present the results we desire. The point we need to remember is that our calling is not to change the hearts of people, but to deliver to them the message of God's Word. God has called us to be faithful in sharing God's Word. It is not our calling to successfully bring people to Christ. That is the Holy Spirit's work. We see that truth in the early part of our text when Ezekiel said: "The Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet." Ezekiel's action of standing up for the Lord and going to a rebellious nation was the result of the Holy Spirit working in Ezekiel through God's Word. We are called to share God's Word and allow the Holy Spirit to work through that Word to change the hearts and lives of people.

Second, as we go forth to share God's Word we are not to be afraid, because God is with us. Another reason we fail to share God's Word is our fear of what people will think of us or how they will treat us. The Lord knows we struggle with that fear and so three times he tells Ezekiel: "Do not be afraid." The

reason is that God promises to be with us as we go and share His Word with others. At the end of Christ's Great Commission in Matthew 28, Jesus says: "And I will be with you always even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

Third, God promises us that as we fulfill our calling to share God's Word, our declaring of God's Truth will not go unnoticed. God says to Ezekiel: "Whether the people of the nation listen or fail to listen, they will know that a prophet has been among them."

The point of these words is not that we try to bring attention to ourselves as followers of Christ, but to realize that as we fulfill our Christian calling people will recognize us as ambassadors for Christ. The greatest compliment I ever received was a few years ago when a man from Bremen came up to me and said: "I have become interested in learning more about Jesus. I have watched you through the years and knew that if I wanted to learn more about Jesus, you were the one to help me." People of God this is what God wants from us as we live in America today. We are to be lights for Jesus.

A couple of weeks ago straight-line winds of 60 to 70 miles per hour went through the Bremen area and left a portion of the town without power for some time. This was tremendously frustrating to me as I sat at dining room table at 5 o'clock in the morning. I sat in darkness and was unable to read, write, or work on the computer. I finally remembered that we had a kerosene lamp and so I got it out and lit the wick. Darkness was dispelled and I was able to do some work.

This illustration points to what God is speaking about in today's text. We

are to be kerosene lamps in a nation that is dealing with spiritual darkness. He has fueled our lives with His grace. We are to be the bringer of God's Word and His Light, Jesus Christ. We are the ones who need to be fueling ourselves by God's Word and bringing the whole counsel of God back to America. We need to declare the Law of God and to present the message of the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life through Jesus Christ. This is the Christian's calling in America today. Amen.