

Bible Study

Be Silent No More

Leader's Guide

(Ezekiel 3:18-21) *“When I say to a wicked man, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself. Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before him, he will die. Since you did not warn him, he will die for his sin. The righteous things he did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the righteous man not to sin and he does not sin, he will surely live because he took warning, and you will have saved yourself.”*

Introduction

Generally speaking, the collapse of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) at the hands of Assyrians is marked by the Fall of Samaria around 722 B.C. The collapse of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) by the Babylonians is marked by the Fall of Jerusalem around 586 B.C.

The prophet Ezekiel conducted his work between 593 B.C. to 571 B.C. This means he saw the developments leading to the demise of the Southern Kingdom and the apostasy of its people resulting in the exile to Babylon. For that reason Ezekiel served as a “watchman” (3:17) to warn the people not only of their impending doom but of their own responsibility for it as well as the welfare of others.

The book of Ezekiel is the historical accounting of people becoming less spiritual and more self-serving. The parallels to the dangers we face today are obvious.

What does the Bible mean by “wickedness”?

(Genesis 39:9-10) “No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.”

(1 Samuel 2:12) “Eli’s sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD.”

(2 Kings 17:11-12) “At every high place they burned incense, as the nations whom the LORD had driven out before them had done. They did wicked things that provoked the LORD to anger. They worshiped idols, though the LORD had said, ‘You shall not do this.’”

(1 Timothy 1:9-11) “We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.”

How serious is sin?

(1 Corinthians 8:13) “Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.”

(1 Corinthians 15:17-18) “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.”

(1 Timothy 5:20) “Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.”

(James 1:15) “Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

■ What does the Bible mean when it says, “You will surely die”?

(Genesis 2:17) “... but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

(Revelation 21:8) “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

■ How emphatic is the command for us to “warn” others?

(2 Chronicles 19:10) “In every case that comes before you from your fellow countrymen who live in the cities-whether bloodshed or other concerns of the law, commands, decrees or ordinances-you are to warn them not to sin against the LORD; otherwise his wrath will come on you and your brothers. Do this, and you will not sin.”

(Matthew 18:15-17) “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

(Galatians 6:1) “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”

(1 John 4:21) “And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

■ What It Means for Me Today **Luke 10:29-37 & Philippians 2:3-4**

The application of this section of Scripture for our daily lives is rooted in our love for others. As a precursor to making practical applications, read the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) and Philippians 2:3-4.

1. Articulate areas in which people sin (especially in the arena of life issues) and yet their sin is allowed to stand unchallenged.
2. What kinds of sins are we able to commit in full view of others without correction?
3. Can you give any examples in which we were corrected of a sin lovingly by a fellow Christian?
4. Why do you think people are so hesitant to correct sin?

5. How is correcting sinners ever done poorly? (See 2 Timothy 4:2; Matthew 7:1-2)

6. According to the Ezekiel reference, how important is it for us to correct the sins of others?

7. In what ways can this congregation help you to obey the Ezekiel directive?

8. In what ways as a congregation can we collectively obey the Ezekiel directive?