

The Watchman

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[0:00] We're in the book of Ezekiel chapter 3.

Just as a launching pad, Ezekiel chapter 3 verse 17. We're talking about the watchman as Ezekiel was called to be.

As we are, I put to you, the watchman. And we read in Ezekiel 3 verse 17 these words. It says, the Lord is speaking to Ezekiel and says these words, Ezekiel 3 verse 17.

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore, hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me.

So God gave Ezekiel a job to do, an important work to do. A watchman is to stand guard. You think of watchmen as they are known today as security guards.

[1:20] You could say they keep watch, they keep alert, they are watching out what's happening. Back in the Hebrews time, the children of Israel's time, the watchmen were stationed on the walls of the city.

Those high walls that would go encircling a city. And the watchmen would mount a post on the top of those walls. They would station themselves there. And they would sound a warning out if an enemy came.

They would be scaring the horizon and they would see the approaching enemy. And they would get out their shofar and blow the horn of warning. They would give a shout of the enemy's approach.

And Israel's prophets were like watchmen, warning the nation that God was bringing judgment if the people did not repent. Watchmen on the walls. Another place for watchmen was at the place of vineyards.

Where the vineyard, the field, was guarded by the watchmen. They'd have some kind of tower and they would watch and guard from animals and thieves. And there is a sense I'll put to you tonight where every believer has in a sense that kind of responsibility of a watchman.

[2:31] There's that sense for all of you that believe that we are watchmen for our Lord. In other words, it's witnesses for Christ. So I'll put to you some three things that we see are features of the ministry, the service of a watchman.

And so we see, as Ezekiel was told, he was called to watch out. To watch out. And so I brought these in case there's lots of people on the back row so that I could see your faces tonight.

So it's the sense, and it's sometimes the case, isn't it? People take the back row, but all your spiritual ones, there's no distinction, there's no preference of persons.

That we're all one together. But there is that tendency, that human tendency to take the back row. But the sense where the watchman is one who is watching, is looking out. The watchman's got those binoculars, not that they had in Bible days, but they would stand on the wall and they'd look into the horizon.

They'd look as far as they could to be able to look out and see the approaching dangers. And when you think of watchmen, as we think of them today, as those that would have guard duty, as soldiers would, as crew members on a ship would station themselves on the crow's nest at the top of the vessel.

[3:48] Especially before radar was invented, they had to likewise keep watch for the reefs and the dangers, the harbours ahead, like soldiers when there was a war on, and so on.

So we see the watchman had to keep a lookout. And friends, I put to you tonight that we are watchmen. We are also to watch, because something's coming, amen?

Someone's coming. Someone's coming. We are to watch for Christ's return. Watch for the enemy and his tricky ways. Watch for every opportunity we can to serve our Lord.

Watch over our words. Watch over our lives, our families, our circumstances. And Mark 13, 37, our Lord says, What I say unto you, I say unto all.

Watch. So that term watch is for all of us. It's not for just the preacher, the prophet. It's for all. Our Lord says unto you all, to all his followers, all his disciples.

[4:52] Our Lord says in the same context in Mark 13, he says watch and pray. Watch and pray. In that same context, it's associated with that concept of his coming.

Mark 13 is in the context of his coming. So we should watch, we should watch and pray. So every Christian I put to him has a responsibility to watch. The Lord calls us to that.

As Paul writes along the same line in 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 6, he says, Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober. Now there's someone here tonight told me they had a late night last night, so I'm keeping a careful watch on them.

That they stay sober and alert. And there's that sense where we should all keep our eyes peeled.

Watch. Watch for the signs of his coming, friends. We talked a little about that this morning.

The signs of his coming. He says watch. Be alert. He says I'm coming. And to watch for the signs of his coming. Cole writes and he says watch and be sober.

[5:54] These are days we should be sober. Not the opposite of sober.

Amen. We should be sober. So as watchmen, we have to have clear hands.

Clear thinking.

Keep our senses. Keep alert. And 1 Peter 4 has the same thing. Be sober. And watch unto prayer. The end of all things is at hand.

You know, Jesus is coming. Amen. Do you believe that? The Lord Jesus is coming. The end of all things is at hand. Now, a preacher called Spurgeon said this about the lighthouse keeper.

He says the minister of Christ should feel like the old keeper of the lighthouse. Life was failing fast, but summoning all his strength, he crept around once more, you know, climbing those spiral stairs to the top of the mast of the lighthouse and making sure the lights were on.

And Spurgeon says, may the Holy Ghost enable his servants to keep the beacon fire blazing, to warn sinners of the rocks, the shoals and the quicksands that surround them.

[6:59] So another sense of, again, you think back to the old days when they had lighthouses that had to be manned. They had to have people that were making sure the light was on.

It didn't go out. The watchman has to be on the ball. We've all got a responsibility to watch. So there's no slacking of teasing. You know, imagine back in wartime days if the soldier on guard was sneezing at the post.

Every one of us has a station to man. And Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 16, 13, watch him, stand fast in the faith, quit him, or act like men.

Be strong. So be on the alert, be on the guard, let us be strong. The watchman is not only to watch, but to warn. We've got a responsibility to warn. Now, we all know sometimes people don't want to hear.

They don't want to hear the gospel. They don't want to hear, as you give them some kind of, even just a different opinion these days, isn't it? You know, you risk offending people.

[8:05] I think I've offended family members just expressing my opinion about the corona and all this garbage. And it's almost like expressing an opinion that's contrary to what others think, and they shoot you down in flames.

You don't speak up and say anything these days. It's such an easily offended generation. But, friends, God calls us to be watchmen willing to warn people.

Warn people of danger. If there's danger, we should warn people about it, shouldn't we? If there's something that we should be, we have some concern about, we should have the freedom and the liberty and the grace to be able to tell people what we think.

But more importantly, what God says. That's what matters. And so, he said, give them warning. He told Ezekiel in that first verse, warn them.

And he says, not only that, but warn them from me. Warn them from me. The warning is God's warning. It's his words. And the watchman has a duty to warn.

[9:08] So, warn people, friends. And, you know, we think of today, people don't like being warned, do they? They just don't want to hear it half the time. And we know that we, by and large, that you might approach 100 people and maybe one, if that.

What's to even give a hearing to it? Yeah, people don't always appreciate the hard truths. They don't appreciate the gospel. They don't appreciate the precious truths that you're trying to impart. And, friends, when we tell people the gospel, it's not that we're trying to, like I put to some people, we're not out there to win an argument.

You can win an argument and lose a friend. We're not out there to be obnoxious. We're out there to win some, to be winsome, have a winsome personality. We're out there to tell people about Christ, to attract people to the Savior, to invite them to meet our best friend and the best friend.

So, friends, as a pastor too, I'm watching over souls. And that's a heavy thing. As it reads in Hebrews 13, 17, it says, obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves.

For they watch, it says, they watch for your souls. That they must give, as they that must give account. That they may do it with joy and not with grief. For that is unprofitable for you.

[10:24] So, whoever it is that has a pastoral responsibility, it's a watching over souls. That's a heavy responsibility. You know, I'd like to think I'm doing what I can.

But we know we can always improve that. But that sense of watching over other people's souls, it's a heavy responsibility. It's no light thing. So, a watchman must faithfully relay God's word.

He says, warn them, warn them from me. It's a huge responsibility that we all have for other souls.

The influence that we have on the souls of our family members, of our friends, our workmates, of people that we mix with and acquaint ourselves with.

We've got a responsibility, every one of us, to watch. To watch and to warn. So, the watchman must send a signal, a warning. You know, if I have the shofar that my dad likes to play with, I can blow it. And, you know, it's a loud sound. It's a shocking sound. No, don't go. It's a jarring sound, isn't it? It's an unnerving sound.

[11:28] And, friends, the watchman has to sound the alarm. That means warning about danger. Alerting people to danger. As Paul did faithfully, day and night, it says of him, as he writes in Acts 20, 31, he speaks.

He says, therefore, what? To remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one of you day and night with tears. A warning is something critical.

And Paul says, I'm going to take it. I'll take it so seriously that I'm willing to warn people day and night. Day and night. Day and night. Because it's important to warn people if they're in danger.

It's a serious thing. People are in danger. Think of the dangers of just the danger of a false doctrine. The danger of a false philosophy. I know, like, we were out yesterday and talking to some and they say, oh, well, we respect all religions.

We're respectful. Look, and as my colleague Neil was saying, well, we respect people and we respect that they have their own positions on things.

[12:36] But if something is wrong, we love them enough to tell them the truth. And friends, it's like Paul said, have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth.

There's a place and a point where the truth is offensive. If someone's fixed on some false idea, they're going to get to heaven through some other way. Then they need to know, no, no way.

That's not right. And we love you enough to tell you the truth. And as Christians, that's what we do.

Paul says this. He says, warning every man. He's not talking about preaching Christ. He says, we're warning every man.

Teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Paul says, every man needs warning. I need warning.

Warning. When you see that I'm doing something wrong, there's some error, there's some fault.

Every man needs warning. Every man, everyone needs warning. Some people need more warning than others.

[13:32] As we read in 1 Thessalonians 5.14, Paul says, I exhort you, brethren. Warning them that are unruling. Comfort the feeble-minded. Support the way you can be patient toward all men.

There's some people that are plainly unruling. They might be disturbing a church or sowing discord and causing strife. They need to be warned, firmly warned. I read this quote.

Most want a preacher who is into sharing, suggesting, and soothing them in their sins. Years ago, I read a story about a truck driver.

And this will appeal to the truck drivers in our congregation tonight. There's a story about a truck driver who, on a foggy night, he plunged his rick down a river gorge where he'd expected to find a familiar bridge.

Miraculously unentered, the shaken trucker crawled from the wreckage and made his way back up to the road, frantically waving his arms and screaming at approaching vehicles.

[14:27] He did all that he could to warn them of the impending danger. The bridge is out. The bridge is out. Turn around. Most of the traffic on this foggy night ignored his pleas.

And they thought he was a wacko. People can think you're a wacko as a Christian. Amen? Isn't that true? Be a wacko for Jesus. A thought for Christ.

Honestly, be willing to say, you're going the wrong way. Repent. Turn to God. Trust Christ. The bridge is out. Friends, it's like the situation today, isn't it?

The world that we're living in. And the warnings go unheeded. We might warn and be reviled and ridiculed. Just like the drivers passing the truckie. Trying to warn them that they were going the wrong way.

There was a danger ahead. The bridge is out. Francis, the bridge is out. That your journey is in. I need to warn you. We need to warn those that have got...

[15:28] They're going in the wrong direction. The bridge is out. They're headed down the road to destruction. And so we must sound a warning. We must do. It's critical. It's vital. And friends, it's very telling how the watchmen are instructed.

In Isaiah 56, we see the prophet Isaiah is told, His watchmen are blind. They're all ignorant. They're all dumb dogs. They cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

They're speaking about really false prophets. People that should have been giving a warning, but were not giving a warning. Now, you might have a guard dog like this one. You know, a bit of a guard dog. There's not much good.

Not much chop. They just lounge around and sleep all the time. They're dumb dogs. They cannot bark. They're sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Friends, the Bible talks about speaking the truth in love.

There's a need for warning. Warning. Wake up. There's a need for warning. The tough love. Amen. We need to love one another enough to tell people, Jesus is coming. Get ready. Get saved.

[16:32] There's a time of Christ is coming. There's judgment ahead. And we need to wake people up. Oh, that's my third point. I'm not there yet. But now the Spirit says that in the latter times, a time shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.

Friends, the Bible says in the last times there's going to be perilous times. These are important truths that we need to get urgent about. There's wrong demonic teachings that are leading people astray.

There's error everywhere. There's so much false teaching. And it's creeping into good churches. And we must be faithful to the Word of God, friends. We must be. We cannot deviate. If someone has a false belief, let's lovingly confront them.

We must. It's the same as, blow the trumpet. Shout. The bridge is out. Get a bit excited about the truth that you know. Jesus is coming and people are going to hell.

We've got to stand in the way and tell them they're going to hell. Now that's one of the toughest things to say. But honestly, we were talking with someone yesterday. And basically, they were set on the road to hell.

[17:38] And I said, look, if you don't change, you're going to hell. And I didn't say that because we want to, you know, you're going to hell, you know. But the Bible says you're going to hell.

If you don't know Christ, you're going to hell. There's no two ways about it. Well, there are two ways. One way or the other way. Friends, it's only the way. It's Jesus.

He's the only way. And it's hell if you've not got Jesus. So we need to get excited about this important truth. To boldly proclaim it. To not be afraid. To tell that the truth is Jesus. He is the truth. John 14, 6. And so Isaiah 58, verse 1, the prophet is told, cry aloud, spare not, lift up my voice like a trumpet. Show my people their transgression.

Friends, some people may reject our words. While you may lovingly warn them. That's what we seek to do. That's all we seek to do. We're not here to say we're holier than thou.

[18:38] To put people down. To put on some pretense. To make people feel bad. Because where they were, we were. Where they are, we were. But for the grace of God, we'd be on the same track to hell.

And because we know Christ as Saviour, that we want to tell people to turn around. Our world is sinful, let's face it. They're saying right is wrong, and wrong is right. They've got totally wacko. And we need to warn people, in these telling times, it says, well unto them that call evil good. And good evil. That's Isaiah 5, verse 20. Well unto them.

Now that's heavy. That's a stern warning again. Whoa! Unto them. It's damnation. Unto them. But call evil good. And good evil.

This is nothing to pussyfoot around. To tiptoe between the tulips about. If sin is sin, the Bible says it's sin, then it's sin. There's no getting around it. They put darkness for light, light for darkness, sweet for bitter, bitter for sweet.

[19:40] And friends, some consider homosexuality an acceptable lifestyle. They don't call adultery and fornication sin. It's just an affair. It's just a fling. People don't care about abortion or divorce.

Our world is in a terrible state. We need to issue warning. We've got to speak. We've got to speak now. Well, we can speak. So we must give warning.

And that warning should be loud and clear. Like a trumpet. Rebuking, correcting, challenging. Make efforts. Think of the ones in your life I've had occasion to speak very frankly with some family members of mine.

I wanted to warn them. I don't want to leave them in any doubt that I'm concerned for their soul. To watch and see the danger that lies ahead for those that are messing around on the fence.

Not serious about their faith or hardly a faith at all to see. Friends, I'm concerned for their souls. As a father watching over, God help them.

[20:41] God help them. God help them. My heart bleeds. It grieves. It cries out when people are in this state of I don't know what. People need warning.

Paul says warning every man. There's a need for warning. So we see a watchman just watch. You know, watch, warn, and thirdly, wake people up.

Wake up! Wake up! People are asleep, aren't they? This world is asleep. The world is asleep. God uses the watchman to wake people up.

They sleep on. They drift on. It's like people in a burning house. There's a fire. Get out! You see a house on fire and you know someone's in there.

You want to shout and scream and warn and sound the alarm because people are sleeping and that's the problem. We should be like a smoke detector that will wake people up.

[21:46] Sometimes it seems like we as God's watchmen, we don't realise, we don't get the urgency of that. that our responsibility is that to wake people.

Not everyone will wake up when they stir some a little from their slumber. You know, and they might just want to hit the snooze button. It's a bit like my afternoon sleep this afternoon.

You know, they close their eyes and just think, oh, just a little bit longer. You know, people are like that, aren't they? We're all like that, aren't we? You know, just a little bit more slumber, just a little bit more sleep, just a little bit more of crossing the hands.

You know, they'll close their eyes again and close their ears. People that you know, you love, you tell them, you tell them, you tell them again, but they're asleep. They might stir a little, but they're asleep.

Friends, our Lord is looking for people that will hear, with ears to hear, people that will listen. And our job is to rouse the slumbering ones. Sometimes we've got to shake people.

[22:43] Do I have to shake you? It's easy to fall asleep, especially when there's long-winded preachers going on and on. But friends, there's an important truth that we need to awake to righteousness.

It's like, there's a stirring that needs to happen. It says that we should stir some people up. We should stir some people up. And sometimes people are going to get annoyed with you. You ever woken up, one of your children, when they were little, and come on, it's time to get up, go to school. They don't always appreciate it, do they? It's the same spiritually, so, isn't it? When you try to rouse someone from slumber, from spiritual sleep, when you try to wake people up about their sin, to wake people up to get serious about God, to wake people up to truly serve and take it honestly, seriously, wholeheartedly, to please God, to serve Him, to give their heart to Him.

It's as if people are like in this picture here, people in a canoe, in the lovely, gentle waters, as the canoe kind of rocks. And you're lying there in that canoe, and you're lying back in that canoe, and it's nice and comfortable.

You hear the sounds of the ripples of the water, and it's so lovely, and you hear the birds tweeting in the background, and you're just saying, you've got to sleep in the canoe. But then, it's about to crash over the edge of the waterfall.

[24:02] It's about to go into the white waters. Friends, if someone's asleep in a canoe, you'd better wake them up. Amen? But it's going to go crashing over the edge. And, to be awoken and can be a disturbing sound.

To be stirred from sleep by a loud trumpet. It was annoying. It was uncomfortable. But better to offend than to compromise the truth. It's the same with doctrine, with urging people to spiritual life, giving people the gospel who might be intent on their hellward lifestyle.

It's going to be offensive to them. People are going to get offended. But we must. We must. And friends, even Christians can get sleepy.

They can get sleepy, can't we? The church can be likened to a person in a coma. They look asleep. They look like they're asleep. There we go. They look asleep, and they're still alive.

Their heart beats. They breathe, but they do not wake up. They're unconscious. A lot of believers are like that, aren't we? We can be like that. Sound asleep. The church, by and large, is sleeping.

[25:12] Inactive, carnal. Saints aren't spiritually awake. The devil kind of chloroforms us, I think. And we get dull, we get lifeless, we get careless.

We don't have that conviction of sin. And it's uncomfortable when sin is exposed. God's watchman, which is all of us, must be bold enough to take the risk of stirring people up.

Don't be afraid to wake people up. You know people in your life that need a wake up, a wake up call, don't you? Think of it. You know, it makes me wonder when I, at times, I have these, you know, occasions where you hear someone who's passed away, and you think, did I tell them?

Did I tell them before they passed away? We don't know how long we've got. There's people in your life, friends, people you're up shoulders with that you know, they need Jesus. Have you told them? Have you told them?

Wake them, wake them. Awaken them from their carelessness. Awaken their conscience by the Spirit of God. Awaken them to the reality of their sinfulness. Awaken them to love and zeal for the Lord.

[26:19] Awaken them to their need of Him. Friends, I'm going to close with a little letter here. A letter from Satan. Obviously, this is tongue-in-cheek, but it's spiritual truth here, honestly, people, tonight.

And this is Satan speaking to you. I saw you yesterday as you began your daily chores. You awoke without kneeling to pray. As a matter of fact, you didn't even bless your meals or pray before going to bed last night.

You are so unfaithful. I like that about you. I cannot tell you how glad I am that you have not changed your way of living. Fool, you are mine. Remember, you and I have been going steady for years and I still don't love you yet.

As a matter of fact, I hate you because I hate God. I am only using you to get even with God. He kicked me out of heaven and I'm going to use you as long as possible to pay Him back.

You see, fool, God loves you and He has great plans in store for you but you have yielded your life to me and I'm going to make your life a living hell. That way, we'll be together twice.

[27:25] This will really hurt God. Thanks to you, I'm really showing Him His boss in your life with all of the good times we've had. We have been watching dirty movies, cursing people, stealing, lying, being hypocritical, fornicating, telling dirty jokes, gambling, overeating, backstabbing people, He goes on and on.

Surely you don't want to give all of this up. Come on fool, let's burn together forever. I've got some hot plans for you. This is just a letter of appreciation from me to you.

I'd like to say thanks for letting me use you for most of your foolish life. You are so gullible. I laugh at you. When you are tempted to sin, you give in.

Ha ha ha ha. You make me sick. Sin is beginning to take its toll on your life. You look 20 years older now and I need some new blood. So go ahead and teach some children how to sin.

All you have to do, smoke, get drunk, drink while underage, cheat, gamble, gossip, fornicate, and live being as selfish as possible. And do all of this in the presence of children and they will do it too.

[28:36] Kids are like that. Well, fool, I have to go now. I'll be back in a couple of seconds to tempt you again. If you were smart, you would run somewhere, confess your sins and live for God with what little bit of life that you have left.

It's not my nature to warn anyone, but to be your age and still sinning is becoming a little ridiculous. Don't get me wrong. I still hate you. It's just that you make a better fool for Christ.

End quote. You know, there's a lot of, you know, thoughts there that some have penned. But the point is that Satan wants you to just stay asleep.

Satan wants you to stay careless. He wants you to be a lackadaisical Christian, if that. And every believer is called, I put to you tonight, to be a watchman, to be willing to stand like Ezekiel did, that our mission is clear.

We have the same mission, the mission of a watchman. And that means we should be watching out. The Lord is coming soon. This is no time to dilly-dally. This is no time to be a half-hearted Christian.

[29:44] This is no time for compromise. We should watch out. We've got to be on the alert because Jesus is coming. Amen. Watch out. And watch the signs of his coming. They're all around you.

Especially the falling away at the church. That will happen first. We see the need to watch out.

Secondly, we see the need to warn, to lovingly warn. We've got a message that needs to be urgently delivered.

And who's going to give it? You and me. God's not going to send angels. God's not going to send angels or visions or dreams necessarily. He's going to use human vessels.

Men and women just like you and me. In fact, men and women like, not just like you and me, but men and women, you. That's the people he wants to send.

That's the people he's going to give the warning through. You and me. So warn people and wake people up. Honestly, be a watchman.

[30:40] Be a watchman for Christ. Honestly, people tonight, I urge you, and what I'm speaking about, really, I'm talking about witnessing. This is about your personal witnessing. It's all of those three things, really, isn't it?

Watch out. Look out for those souls that need Christ. Warn them. Care enough to tell them. Even if they're going to kick you in the guts and slap you around the head and laugh you to scorn, you must warn people.

Otherwise, we'd be like the truckies that didn't go like this, but just let the trucks, just let the traffic go down where the bridge was out. We've got to warn people, and we must wake people up because there's a spiritual slumber that is engulfing our nation.

And friends, if you're asleep tonight spiritually, wake up. Wake up. Trust Christ for your Saviour. Christian, leave the slumber zone and get on track.

Amen. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word, that it is a wake-up call, the word of God. And we pray that we'll take these things to heart, and put them into our lives, that we might be such

people, that we'll be watchmen, as to give us grace to be wise in this regard, to be on the watch, and telling others while we can, while we must, and as you call us to, we must obey that call.
[31:56] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.