

Ezekiel – Teaching Notes

(Ezekiel 3:1-11; 7/23/17)

Introduction: A key idea in today's Sunday School material is that God is sending Ezekiel to share His word with a people who were unwilling to listen to God. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to be faithful to God's assignment and open to hearing and obeying God's word for our lives.

Body:

Read Ezekiel 3:1-4

I. Tasted Words. The Lord refers to Ezekiel as "son of man." The Lord wants Ezekiel to eat the scroll and then speak to the people of Israel. Ezekiel obeys. He notes that the scroll tasted as sweet as honey.

Applications –

- **Internalizing and sharing God's word.** Notice in vss. 1-4 that Ezekiel was called to internalize God's word and then share it with God's people. First, every believer is called to internalize God's word. We should at least internalize that we are saved by accepting Jesus as our savior by faith and that God is now calling us to love Him and others, as we love ourselves. Personal study, active listening to Bible based preaching, and being in some kind of Bible study/growth group are important ways to internalize God's word. Second, every believer is called to share the internalized word with others. We should do this with both our lips and lives. When our lips and lives contradict one another, people tend to follow our lives. *Let's work on internalizing and sharing God's word with others.*

- **The goodness of God's word.** Notice in vs. 3 that Ezekiel talks about the sweetness of God's word. First, the word is sweet, when we are being blessed and we don't have to do anything that we don't want to do. Second, it may **not** taste sweet, when we must suffer or repent from our wrong doing. But even then, it is still good for us. *Let's live like we appreciate the goodness of God's word, whether it tastes sweet or not to us.* This kind of living includes continuing to prayerfully study and obey God's word with the support of other disciples, even when we don't feel like it.

Read Ezekiel 3:5-7

II. Tested People. The Lord warns Ezekiel that the people of Israel will be difficult. If they were foreigners, they may have been willing to listen. However, Ezekiel is told to expect Israel to be unwilling to listen to him because they are unwilling to listen to the Lord. They are hardened and obstinate.

Applications –

- **Hard hearted people.** Notice in vss. 5-7 that the Lord warns Ezekiel of the people of God being hardened and obstinate. They were unwilling to hear the prophet, because they were ultimately unwilling to hear God. We should brace ourselves for being rejected. There are times when the problem in our ministries is not our method nor our mannerism; it is the unwillingness of the listener to hear and obey God's will. On one hand, we should make sure that our methods and mannerisms are appropriate. But on the other hand, we should work on finding fulfillment/satisfaction

in being obedient to God, even when people are being uncooperative. We should also make sure that we are not a part of the uncooperative crowd. We should hear and obey God's word, no matter what our peers decide to do. *Let's work on being faithful, even when people are not cooperating.*

Read Ezekiel 3:8-11

III. Toughened People. The Lord tells Ezekiel that He will be with him to strengthen him. Ezekiel is to avoid being afraid. Ezekiel is to tell the people what the Lord says, whether they listen or not.

Applications –

- **Hard headed ministers.** Notice in vss. 8-9 that the Lord is to make Ezekiel harder than those to whom he ministers. In like manner, God can give us the strength that we need to do what He has called us to do, even when people don't cooperate. God may not soften their hearts. The people may never change (i.e., in our families, communities, jobs, and churches). But God can still give us strength to do His will. *Let's be open to God using us, despite opposition.* A great part of this application is to have more faith in God than fear of the circumstances.

- **We are all in this thing together.** Notice in vs. 11 that the Lord refers to the people as the people of Ezekiel. There are times when people can act so unfaithfully that we don't want to claim them as "our people" ... smile. But we should be reminded that we, those who are saved, are all members of the one body. We have a vested interest in helping one another be all that God is calling us to be. *Let's work on doing our ministries with the understanding that we are all in this thing together.*

- **Faithful verses successful.** Notice in vs. 11 that Ezekiel is to deliver God's word whether the people listen or fail to listen. It is very challenging to minister to people who don't want to be ministered to. It is extra challenging, when we have a stronger desire to be successful (i.e., reach our goals) than to be faithful (i.e., do what the Lord says do). *Let's develop the faith to be faithful, even when it looks like we are being unsuccessful.* This application calls for prayerfully studying and obeying the Bible with the support of other disciples. It calls for being in supportive relationships with others who will empathize with us and support us.

Conclusion: Let's work on being faithful to God's assignment and open to hearing and obeying God's word for our lives. God has much for those who obey His will.