

Ezekiel 3:1-11,16-27  
"What Motivates Me"

I recognize I would avoid much trouble if I sidestepped certain biblical texts and if I overlooked certain issues all together. However, if I did that, I believe I would be failing you in my role of pastor and ultimately failing Christ who called me. I am convinced the responsibility of the pastor is to preach and teach the whole of scripture. When a pastor does this that pastor is faithfully loving, nurturing, caring for, and serving his/her congregation. Being this type of pastor is no easy feat because opposition abounds to God's word, to Jesus's message, internally and externally, among other things pastors must face. So, what motivates the messenger of God, the pastor/teacher/evangelist, to stay the course of God's word, Jesus' gospel despite the cost? To make it more personal, what motivates me? I'm glad you asked. Ezekiel 3 provides my answer.

**First, the giver and the content of the message. V4, 10-11** <sup>4</sup>And he said to me, "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them. <sup>10</sup>Moreover, he said to me, "Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. <sup>11</sup>And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God,' whether they hear or refuse to hear." The words given to Ezekiel were God's words for God's people. The words were words of life. First, for him and then for everyone else. And he could not be concerned about whether the people would hear him or how they would feel about the message. The moment the messenger shifts his focus to how the people will respond he will undoubtedly change the message or not deliver the message at all. In doing so, he will have failed God, himself and God's people. The message of God, of Christ, must take precedence over how we feel

about the message. Emotions will betray us, but the word of God will never fail us.

**John 6:60-70** “<sup>60</sup>When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” <sup>61</sup>But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? <sup>62</sup>Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? <sup>63</sup>It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. <sup>64</sup>But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) <sup>65</sup>And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”<sup>66</sup> After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. <sup>67</sup>So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” <sup>68</sup>Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, <sup>69</sup>and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

**2 Tim 4:1-4** “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:<sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.<sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup>and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”

**Second, life and death hang in the balance. V16-21** “<sup>16</sup>And at the end of seven days, the word of the Lord came to me: <sup>17</sup>“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>18</sup>If I say

to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. <sup>19</sup> But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. <sup>20</sup> Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand. <sup>21</sup> But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul." If the pastor/teacher refuses to tell the people the truth of scripture and as a result persons die in their sin their blood will be on that pastor's/teacher's hands. Every pastor/teacher/evangelist/etc. will be held accountable for the message he/she gives or chooses not to give. My soul and the soul of every person I serve as pastor is at stake. This motivates me. Enjoy life. Live, but remember we each have a soul, the eternal part of us, that will one day depart from this body. And in that moment what we believe and how we have lived will come to bear, eternally, upon our souls. Life and death hang in the balance. **Deut 30:19-20a** "<sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life, that you and your offspring may live, <sup>20</sup> loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days."

**Matt 16:24-27** "<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.<sup>25</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses

his life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? <sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.”

**Finally, hope of a clear conscience. V27** “<sup>27</sup> But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’ He who will hear, let him hear; and he who will refuse to hear, let him refuse, for they are a rebellious house.” **When you know you have done what the Lord requires of you; that you have preached and taught His word with no ill intent or malice; that you have done so faithfully and in love you can sit down in peace because you have a clear conscience.** Paul and all the faithful who died like him had a clear conscience. They had peace and the full assurance of eternal life because they had faithfully fulfilled their calls. This is my hope, not only for me, but for those I serve.

**2 Tim 4:6-8** “<sup>6</sup> For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”

What motivates me? The message of Jesus Christ, him crucified and resurrected, and that all those I have the honor of serving come to believe in him. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**