

Ezekiel 3:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

Analysis

God promises the faithful watchman: "if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness...thou hast delivered thy soul." The Hebrew phrase "delivered thy soul" (hitzalta et-nafsheka, הַצַּלְתָּ אֶת-נַפְשָׁךְ) means "rescued yourself" or "saved your life." The prophet's responsibility is proclamation, not conversion. Faithful warning frees the messenger from guilt regardless of the hearer's response. This principle appears throughout Scripture: God holds people accountable for rejecting clearly proclaimed truth (John 3:19-20). The doctrine of effectual calling explains why some respond while others refuse—conversion is God's work, but He uses human instruments in His ordained means.

Historical Context

Ezekiel faced the daunting task of preaching to chronically rebellious Israel (593 BC). Many prophets before him had been rejected, persecuted, or martyred. This assurance that faithful warning would "deliver his soul" provided necessary encouragement for sustainable ministry. The exiles' hard-heartedness would have discouraged any merely human messenger. God's promise freed Ezekiel from false guilt over Israel's unbelief while maintaining his responsibility for faithful proclamation. Church history reveals similar patterns: faithful preachers warn clearly, yet many persist in unbelief, demonstrating human responsibility alongside divine sovereignty.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does this verse free gospel messengers from false guilt over others' rejection of the truth?
2. What is the relationship between faithfulness in proclaiming truth and the results we see in ministry?

Interlinear Text

וְאַפָּה	כִּי	הַזְּמָרָת	בְּרַשְׁעַת	וְלֹא	שָׁבַע
H859	H3588	Yet if thou warn	nor from his wicked	H3808	and he turn
		H2094	H7563		H7725
מְרַשְׁעַת	וְמַדְרָכָה	בְּרַשְׁעַת	וְאַתָּה	בְּעִוָּן	וְאַתָּה
not from his wickedness	way	nor from his wicked	H1931	in his iniquity	H5771
H7562	H1870	H7563			
וְאַתָּה	אַתָּה	נִפְשַׁת	הַצְלָתָה		
he shall die	H859	H853	thy soul	but thou hast delivered	
H4191			H5315	H5337	

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 33:9 (Sin): Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

1 Timothy 4:16 (Parallel theme): Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

Ezekiel 14:14 (Parallel theme): Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel 14:20 (Parallel theme): Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

Hebrews 12:25 (Parallel theme): See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

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