

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*, הִצַּלְתָּ אֶת-נַפְשְׁךָ) 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

וְאֵתָהּ H859	כִּי H3588	הִזְהָרְתָּ H2094	הַרְשָׁעָה H7563	וְלֹא H3808	שָׁב H7725
		Yet if thou warn	nor from his wicked		and he turn
מִרְשָׁעָו H7562	וּמִדֶּרֶכּוֹ H1870	הַרְשָׁעָה H7563	הָוָא H1931	בְּעֲוֹנוֹ H5771	
not from his wickedness	way	nor from his wicked		in his iniquity	
יָמָוּת H4191	וְאֵתָהּ H859	אֶת H853	נַפְשְׁךָ H5315	הִצַּלְתָּ H5337	
he shall die		thy soul	but thou hast delivered		

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: