

Ezekiel 3:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

Analysis

God promises blessing for warning even the righteous: "if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live...also thou hast delivered thy soul." This emphasizes ongoing pastoral care, not just evangelism to the lost. The phrase "warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not" recognizes that even believers need exhortation to persevere in holiness. The Reformed emphasis on progressive sanctification appears here—justification is immediate, but sanctification requires continual growth through the means of grace including faithful preaching, admonition, and warning. The minister's calling includes feeding sheep, not just seeking lost lambs.

Historical Context

Among the exiles (593 BC), some genuinely feared God despite the majority's rebellion. These righteous remnant needed strengthening to resist peer pressure, discouragement, and temptation to compromise. Ezekiel's ministry included pastoral encouragement alongside prophetic warning. Jewish tradition emphasized communal accountability, with rabbis responsible for congregational spiritual health. This pattern continued in New Testament church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17) and pastoral oversight (Hebrews 13:17). The principle that ministers must warn even believers against sin reflects the ongoing battle with remaining corruption in this life.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does this verse emphasize the importance of ongoing exhortation and accountability even for mature believers?
2. What is the pastor's responsibility to warn God's people against specific sins threatening their communities?

Interlinear Text

וְאִם יֵי H859 H3588	נִזְכָּר ר	צַדִּיק יִק	לְבַלֵּת י
	Nevertheless if thou warn	man that the righteous	
	H2094	H6662	H1115
וְאִם יֵי	צַדִּיק יִק	לֹא וְהָוָא	וְאִם יֵי
not and he doth not sin	man that the righteous		not and he doth not sin
H2398	H6662	H1931 H3808	H2398
וְיִחְיֶה	וְיִחְיֶה	וְיִחְיֶה	וְיִחְיֶה
he shall surely	he shall surely	Nevertheless if thou warn	
H2421	H2421	H3588 H2094	H859 H853
נַפְשְׁךָ	הַצֶּלֶתְךָ:		
thy soul	also thou hast delivered		
H5315	H5337		

Additional Cross-References

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.

Proverbs 9:9 (Righteousness): Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

1 Corinthians 4:14 (Parallel theme): I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

James 5:20 (Sin): Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Titus 2:15 (Parallel theme): These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

Acts 20:31 (Parallel theme): Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

Psalms 19:11 (Parallel theme): Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.