

Ezekiel 33:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Analysis

"When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." The wicked person's death results from their own sin, but the watchman's silence compounds guilt. This doesn't make the watchman the cause of damnation but makes him culpable for failing to warn. The Reformed distinction between primary and secondary causation applies: God's sovereignty is the primary cause of all outcomes, but human instruments bear real responsibility as secondary causes. Faithful warning doesn't save apart from grace, but its absence involves the messenger in guilt.

Historical Context

Ezekiel ministered to exiles (585 BC) who faced ongoing spiritual danger despite physical judgment already falling. The "wicked man shall die in his iniquity" describes both physical and eternal death—separation from God. Ancient Israel understood blood guilt as serious pollution requiring expiation. The watchman bearing blood guilt for failing to warn reflects serious ministerial accountability. This principle influenced Puritan pastoral theology—pastors must faithfully preach law and gospel, warning of judgment and offering salvation. Paul echoes this in

Acts 20:26-27, declaring himself "pure from the blood of all men" through faithful proclamation.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does this verse challenge comfortable ministry that avoids warning people about sin and judgment?
2. What is the relationship between the watchman's faithful warning and God's sovereign determination of salvation?

Interlinear Text

דְּבָרֶת	אֵל	אִם	וְתִּמְמָתְתָה	בְּשָׁעָה	בְּאָמָר	וְ
When I say	O wicked	O wicked	die	die	H3808	if thou dost not speak
H559	H7563	H7563	H4191	H4191		H1696
וְתִּמְמָתְתָה	בְּשָׁעָה	וְ	בְּעִוָּן	וְ	דְּבָרֶת	אֵל
to warn	O wicked	from his way	H1931	O wicked	H5771	die
H2094	H7563	H1870		H7563		H4191
וְתִּמְמָתְתָה	בְּשָׁעָה	וְ	בְּעִוָּן	וְ	דְּבָרֶת	אֵל
but his blood	at thine hand	will I require				
H1818	H3027	H1245				

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 33:6 (Sin): But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person

from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

Ezekiel 33:14 (Sin): Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

Ezekiel 18:4 (Sin): Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Ezekiel 18:20 (Sin): The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

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