

Rebels, Redemption, and the Remnant

Joe Slater

Ezekiel had a job to do – a message to proclaim – God’s message! “*You shall speak My words to them*” (Ezekiel 2:7). Sounds simple enough. But simple doesn’t necessarily mean easy. Why would this be such a daunting challenge?

Not less than eight times in chapters 2 & 3, God affirms that Israel is rebellious! Just how rebellious were they, you might ask? Consider some other adjectives God uses to describe them: “*impudent,*” “*stubborn,*” “*hard-hearted*” (2:4; 3:7). He compared working with them to dealing with briars and thorns, and dwelling among scorpions! No wonder he had to encourage Ezekiel not to be afraid (2:6).

Jesus has given us His message to proclaim: “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15). People today are still rebellious, stubborn, impudent, and hard-hearted, though not usually to the extreme degree that Ezekiel’s people were.

Too often, though, we are afraid to speak out. We might offend someone! They might not listen! Repeatedly God exhorted Ezekiel to speak “*whether they hear or whether they refuse*” (2:5, 7; 3:11).

Fortunately, there were still a few who would listen. This small remnant still cared enough to “*sigh and cry over all the abominations*” done in Jerusalem” (9:4). And even today, there are still those who will listen, and will respond with faith and obedience.

We cannot tell ahead of time what any particular individual’s reaction to God’s word will be. (After all, would you have thought Saul of Tarsus was a likely prospect for conversion to Christ?) Not every rebel is beyond redemption. Every now and then, one of them

becomes a part of the remnant! Our task, like Ezekiel’s, is to proclaim the message, “*whether they hear, or whether they refuse.*” May God help us to shake off our lethargy and get on with our duty!

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Where Are You Going?

This road doesn't look right with all these old houses. And the new houses? They were not here yesterday. Where are the curves on your old road? And the speed bumps and potholes?

But this road is so smooth, straight, and easy to drive!

You check Facebook to see if your friends have noticed the changes. You check your text messages. Has anyone alerted you?

You don't check your smartphone's GPS app. You don't look at a paper map to see where you are. And heaven forbid you would be so 'old school' as to ask the man in his front yard for help.

The fact is you are on the wrong road.

But how could such a good road be wrong. It feels so good. You are not working hard at driving. On this road you can go fast. There is no need to be alert or careful. How could a straight road without speed bumps be wrong?

The Bible tells us of good roads and bad roads. It tells us the best way is a challenge. The road to great living (and ultimately eternal life) has curves, bumps and potholes. You must be cautious and controlled. Some of it may not paved and might be muddy. It tells us of the easy, fast, interstate-quality drives that go to the bad life (and ultimately THE bad place).

Why should you check the electronic Bible app on your smart phone, or the 'old school' printed Bible that warns us? Be careful: You might discover your are on the wrong road.

So, where are you going?

--Archie Green (DeSoto, TX)

Who Is Shaping Your Thinking?

Paul exhorts us not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). The Psalmist declared, “*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee*” (Psalm 119:11).

We live in a world filled with messages that often conflict with God’s message. We see and hear those messages on television, in movies, and in conversations. We read those conflicting messages in books, magazines, and e-mail.

How many of those messages that are antagonistic toward God’s message are we allowing to shape our thinking? How many of them have subtly convinced us that the road to happiness is found in possessions, beauty, or fame? How many of the world’s messages have persuaded us that the most important thing in life is money, or having other people like us, or having power, or engaging in illicit sexual activity?

God wants our thinking to be shaped by the truth of His word. Many of the things the world calls valuable, God calls worthless. Many of the things the world disdains, God praises. God’s thoughts are not what we’ve heard and read in the messages of this world. They are not His ways (Isaiah 55:8).

Jesus wants to be our Teacher and our Lord. He does not want the world to become our Teacher and thereby become our Lord.

What is shaping your thinking today? Is it the world’s message, or is it God’s message? Are you changing the world, or is the world changing you?

--Danny Tunnell (Miami, OK) *via Old Paths*