

EZEKIEL: THE WATCHMAN

By the Rt. Rev. George de Charms

Lessons: Ezekiel 3:16-21; (33:1-16)

Among the first to be taken captive to Babylon, before the city of Jerusalem was finally destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and while Zedekiah was still on the throne, was a man named Ezekiel, the son of a priest by the name of Buzi. He was taken with the others of the captivity to a place not far from Babylon, on the banks of the River Chebar, a small stream flowing into the Euphrates River. There, like Daniel, he was called to be a Prophet of the Lord. He was taken into the other world, was shown a wonderful vision of the Lord sitting on a throne and surrounded by a great light, and he was commanded to speak to the people the things that the Lord would put into his mouth.

Therefore, while Daniel was living at Babylon, interpreting the dreams of the king, and the writing on the wall, Ezekiel lived by the River Chebar, among his own people, and gave them the words of the Lord. The Lord told him that He had made him a watchman to the house of Israel, to warn them against worshipping the gods of the Babylonians, to avoid the idolatrous practices of their captors, and to maintain their love and worship of the Lord until such time as they could again return to their native land. The Lord said that whenever he saw anyone doing something evil, he should warn him that unless he repented and turned again to the religion of his fathers, he would surely die. If he did not warn him, then he would be blamed, and though the man died, his blood would be required of Ezekiel's hand at the time of judgment in the other world. But if he told him the words of the Lord, he would not be blamed, even though the man insisted upon doing the evil thing.

In ancient times, when every city was surrounded by a high stone wall, with heavy gates of iron or of brass, a watchman was always kept on the top of the wall where he could see far out over the plain. If he saw troops approaching it was his duty to send word at once to the commander of the army, by whose orders the gates would be closed, and the soldiers would seize their arms and hurry to the walls, ready to resist any attack that might be made upon the city. If the watchman fell asleep, or did not send word of an approaching enemy, then he would be blamed for any harm that might come to the city and its inhabitants. If he warned them then whether the city was taken or not, it was not his fault, because he had done his duty.

Ezekiel, and other Prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, were called watchmen because they were able to see into the other world, and could know from the Lord when evil spirits tempted the people, and sought to draw them away from

the worship of the Lord. Every Prophet was given the duty of warning them, and when this happened, of telling them of the danger and advising them to close the gates of their minds against such evil spirits, to shut them out, and fight against them. In this way the Lord could protect them against evil, and this was the purpose of appointing Prophets, and giving them special knowledge from the other world that other men could not possess.

It is just the same today. Your minds are like a city. They have streets, and houses, and people living in them. They have a wall round them, and soldiers to defend them. And evil spirits are always trying to gain entrance there. For they hate men, and seek to destroy their spiritual life. And in order to do this, they come like spies, pretending to be friends, promising to give you things that you want very much if only you will let them into your mind and treat them kindly. But if you do, then they will betray that city to a whole army of evil spirits, which will rush in, capture the city, and burn it with fire, that is, fill it with evil loves that destroy all that is of the Lord, and of heaven with you.

Now you children do not know enough to tell the difference between these evil spirits, pretending to be good, and angels who are really good. But your parents, your teachers, and the ministers of the Church, are given wisdom from the Lord. They are able to see through their pretenses, and know how wicked they are. And so the Lord has given them the duty of telling you when you are tempted to let them into your mind. They are called upon to teach you what kind of things you are to shut out of your minds, telling you to close the gates against them, and to arm the walls, to keep them out. And so they are watchmen even like Ezekiel. They cannot close your minds. You are the only one who can do that. But they can warn you of the danger, and so make it possible for you to keep evil things out of your thoughts. Often you do not see that these things are evil. You see only the fine clothes, the kindly appearance, the outward seeming of these things. It seems to you that they are friends, who will give you something that you would like to have. Your desire blinds your eyes, and makes you invite them in, and makes you follow their advice. But you must listen to what your parents and teachers say. You must realize that they are wiser than you; that they have been placed over you to guard and protect you while you are children, and during all the time you are growing up; that they are watchmen, appointed by the Lord to give you warning of evils that you do not know enough to recognize.

If then you will obey them, and do the things they tell you to do, if you will close the gates of your minds against those evil things, and fight against them, the Lord can guard you against all the evil spirits who are in hell, and can send you an army of angels to fight for you, and give you the victory over them. But if you refuse to obey them, thinking that you know better than they, then will the evil spirits enter in, and take possession of your minds, and will drive you to all kinds of evil things that will destroy your spiritual life.

Family Talk

Your parents and teachers do not tell you what to do and what not to do just to show that they are stronger than you. They do not do this because they love to rule over you. They do it because they love you, because they know the dangers that threaten you, and want to protect you from them. It is from kindness and real affection that they warn you against evil, and even punish you, to help you to drive out evil spirits from your minds. If only you realized this, then you would be very grateful to them. You would listen to them, and obey them, and do everything within your power to help close the gates of your minds against the evil.

Think of this when you are corrected. Remember it when you are tempted to do something that you have been told is wrong. And try hard, every day, to let no enemies from hell enter into your thoughts, however pleasing they may seem, or however much they try to make you believe that they will give you the things you want. Evil spirits cannot give you anything. When they tell you they can, they are not telling the truth. They do not love you. They do not want to make you happy. All they want is to gain power over you. And to do this they pretend to be your friends. If they did not do this, you would never let them in. But they are liars, and this your parents and teachers know; and so they tell you the truth, and warn you not to have anything to do with these evil spirits. If you will listen to them, they will protect you until you yourselves grow up and become wise from the Lord, and then you yourself can stand upon the wall of your mind, and keep evil spirits from entering in.