

Falling Down, Standing Up, Going Forth

Ezekiel 1:28b – 2:3a HCSB When I saw *it*, I fell facedown and heard a voice speaking. 2:1 He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak with you." 2 As He spoke to me, the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet, and I listened to the One who was speaking to me. 3 He said to me: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites *and* to the rebellious nations who have rebelled against Me.

Introduction: Numerous sources are warning of a serious shortage of those going into the ministry. We also know that within churches themselves, there is a shortage of workers. The proportion of those genuinely committed to Christ's kingdom seems to be growing smaller. The prophet Ezekiel has something for us on this subject.

Ezekiel 1 begins: 'Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year...I was among the captives by the River Chebar.' He was 30 years old and a priest. Priests were supposed to begin their service at 30. However, Ezekiel wasn't among the worshipers at the temple in Jerusalem, but among the exiles by the Chebar River. He'd been caught in Nebuchadnezzar's invasion, and at the moment he should have entered priestly service, he was exiled 900 miles away in a refugee camp with no altars, no sacrifices, no temple. His life's training seemed wasted. Then three things happened to him in rapid succession, and from that moment he became one of the most effective men God ever planted on earth. The Lord wants to do the very same three things to us.

1. God Knocks Us on Our Faces (v. 28b). "When I saw it, I fell facedown." The vision in chapter 1 is one of the strangest in the Bible, but the point is reasonably clear: Ezekiel was getting a glimpse of the Sovereign Throne of Almighty God. We have a description of the whirlwind and the cherubim who guard the throne, but the main point is the majesty and grandeur of Almighty God who is in total control of His creation.

- Ezekiel 1:26-28 HCSB The shape of a throne with the appearance of sapphire stone was above the expanse. There was a form with the appearance of a human on the throne high above. 27 From what seemed to be His waist up, I saw a gleam like amber, with what looked like fire enclosing it all around. From what seemed to be His waist down, I also saw what looked like fire. There was a brilliant light all around Him. 28 The appearance of the brilliant light all around was like that of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day. This was the appearance of the form of the LORD's glory. When I saw *it*, I fell facedown and heard a voice speaking.

One moment Ezekiel's face was downcast, and the next he fell facedown in worship. One of the reasons so few today are going into the ministry is because we have lost the sense of the majesty and the grandeur of God. If we don't have a vision of who He is, it's difficult to acquire a vision of what He wants us to do. If we would serve God as we should, we must see Him as He is.

2. God Stands Us on Our Feet (v. 2:1a). Ezekiel didn't stay on his face very long, for the Lord told him to get up, for He had something to say to him. The Spirit entered Ezekiel, and he stood on his feet to listen. At the end of chapter 2, this intake of God's Word is pictured in a graphic way as the Lord commanded Ezekiel to eat a scroll.

- Psalms 19:1-14 HCSB For the choir director. A Davidic psalm. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims the work of His hands. 2 Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge. 3 There is no speech; there are no words; their voice is not heard. 4 Their message has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the inhabited world. In the heavens He has pitched a tent for the sun. 5 It is like a groom coming from the bridal chamber; it rejoices like an athlete running a course. 6 It rises from one end of the heavens and

circles to their other end; nothing is hidden from its heat. 7 The instruction of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, making the heart glad; the commandment of the LORD is radiant, making the eyes light up. 9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are reliable and altogether righteous. 10 They are more desirable than gold--than an abundance of pure gold; and sweeter than honey--than honey dripping from the comb. 11 In addition, Your servant is warned by them; there is great reward in keeping them. 12 Who perceives his unintentional sins? Cleanse me from my hidden faults. 13 Moreover, keep Your servant from willful sins; do not let them rule over me. Then I will be innocent, and cleansed from blatant rebellion. 14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You, LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

- Jeremiah 15:16 HCSB Your words were found, and I ate them. Your words became a delight to me and the joy of my heart, for I am called by Your name, LORD God of Hosts.
- Revelation 10:9-10 HCSB 9 So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take and eat it; it will be bitter in your stomach, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." 10 Then I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It was as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I ate it, my stomach became bitter.

Getting into God's Word is like eating. In much of Europe and the Middle East, supper is a slow, wonderful affair that may last a couple of hours; designed to be lingered over and enjoyed. In America, we drive by a restaurant, grab the food through window, and eat on the run.

Something akin to that happens in Bible study. We're often in such a rush that we gulp down a quick passage, but we need time to chew, swallow, and digest it. If God is going to use us in His service, we must be serious partakers of His Word.

3. God Send Us on Our Way (v. 3a). "He said to me: 'Son of man, I am sending you...' In John 20:21, Jesus said, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." We say: But Lord, I have other plans! *You are sent*. Lord, I don't want to go there! *You're sent*. Lord, they might reject me. Yes, The Lord told Ezekiel, "I am sending you to a rebellious nation, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the lord God.' Whether they hear or whether they refuse – yet they will know a prophet has been among them" (vv. 2:3-5).

Conclusion: Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, so send I you," and the question we must ask is, "Where is our cross? What does God want me to do?" We're knocked on our faces in worship – that's God's majesty. We're set on our feet to listen – that's God's message. We're sent on our way to evangelize – that's God's mission. When we get a glimpse of His majesty, devour His message, and respond to His mission, something happens to us. We become His tools on earth. As for the world around us, whether they listen or whether they don't – yet will they know that there is a prophet among them.