

The Predisposing Nature of Personal Character
From Ezekiel 3
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From Ezekiel 3. THE PREDISPOSING NATURE OF PERSONAL CHARACTER

PART 1: CHARACTER CAN OVERRULE LOGIC, INTELLECT and THE WORD OF GOD v.6, 7, 8-11, 18-21, 26-27.

#1. The Lord instructed Ezekiel regarding the relation, always existing, between revealed truth --> and personal character. The condition or state of personal character *precedes the reading of the Word of God*. This is true for everyone, believer or unbeliever.

#2. The Almighty told the prophet: "...I have sent you to them who should listen to you" v.6 -- "yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen..." v.7.

#3. Ezekiel was to recognize that the locus of this problem was not revelation, not the Word of God, not the Bible; rather it was the personal character of those who heard it. "Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate" v.7.

#4. There is much emphasis in this chapter on *the predisposing nature of the personal character of those who read Scripture*. "Go to the exiles, to the sons of your people, and speak to them and tell them, whether they listen or not, 'Thus says the Lord God'" v.11.

#5. We are being, thereby, warned about this often underestimated factor in the reading of, the acceptance and or rejection of the Bible, or any part of it. *But it must not be overlooked nor underestimated*.

#6. So, the elephant in the room is being exposed. Not for the first time in history, is the Bible and then the preaching of it, found to be objectionable and even dangerous.

#7. People of biblical faith are to be leveraged into silence. The Scriptures are ridiculed as far removed from present reality. Some think that they can safely dispose of the voice of God in the world.

#8. Children in public school systems are being taught to ground their reasoning and behavior in contemporary sociology. The progressive thinkers among the churches are actively trying to move faith away from revelation.

#9. The Lord has another idea. "But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you will say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God'. He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house" v.27.

Question: What is the relation between "Thus says the Lord God" and my personal character?

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PART 2: THE NEXUS BETWEEN SIN and PERSONAL CHARACTER v.4, 7, 17.

#1. Atheism, again, is ascendant. It is on the rise, we are told, because modern knowledge has surpassed the superstitions of the pre-scientific past.

#2. Many books on atheism are written pointing to the alleged inadequacies of the Bible and theism (belief in God). In those writings, following the ideology of evolution, there are no references to the issue of personal character. It is a non-factor.

#3. The Almighty enters the discussion: "Then He said to me, 'Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them' v.4. "My words". The work of the prophet was to preach the word of God into the society. His intention was to drive a wedge of separation between *sin and personal character*. He intends to make clear the distinction between what God wants and what we want. There was no language barrier to complicate this v.5.

#4. The Text foresaw the general rule that most of the people would not listen v.7. Why not? Because the practice and reasoning of sin had fused with personal character.

#5. The amazing truth: Those people did not reject revelation because it was inadequate. They rejected it, precisely because it was delivered, designed and calculated by the Lord, to separate sin from character.

#6. The Bible and its preaching are hardly inadequate to the task. They are too adequate. "Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear from My mouth, warn them from Me" v.17.

#7. The world does not want to dispense with its sin. Even the people of faith, sometimes, do not want sin wrenched away from character formation. That is called by atheists being *value free*. World criticisms of the Bible, Christian faith and revealed morality are, in fact, proof of the assimilation of sin and personal character.

#9. The Almighty is smarter than we are. So, ..."Son of man take into your heart all My words which I will speak to you and listen carefully" v.10.

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PART 3: TO MAKE THEM KNOW v.1-3.

#1. The Word of God, the preaching of revealed truth and personal character are all expected, by the Lord, to share a common continuum.

#2. "Then He said to me, 'Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel'" v.1.

#3. But it is the state of personal character that will decide whether or not to join this revealed continuum.

#4. This structure begins with

- (a) the Lord, who, by direct effect, -->
- (b) commits His will to a fixed language manifold: "this scroll". -->Then
- (c) Ezekiel is the example of a man in time, possessing an individual personal character and who consciously acquiesces to this continuum and assimilates, metabolizes the revealed language-->
- (d) Next *the one of redeemed character* speaks to a "rebellious" world.

#5. The purpose of this continuum, starting in eternity and with its terminus in the earth, is *to make them know*". Personal character, therefore, is to be an *objectification of this structure or continuum; a walking, talking manifestation of it*.

#6. "So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll" v.2. When Ezekiel ingested that scroll, that act circumscribed rationalism, relativism and subjectivism in his thought, speech and behavior. There was nothing human about that range of language and ideas.

#7. Any perspective on Scripture, any understanding of the Bible not corresponding to the continuum, is necessarily *inferior*. "He said to me, 'Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you'" v.3. All men should learn what Ezekiel learned: "Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth".

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PART 4: PERSONAL CHARACTER AS WATCHMAN v.12-17.

#1. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers and manages the proclamation of the revealed truth to mankind v.12, 13. Ezekiel's spirit was enraged, "embittered," at the immorality and depraved character of his people v.14.

#2. The prophet's very presence among the people represented, for them, a disturbing influence. "...I sat there seven days where they were living, causing consternation among them" v.15.

#3. This man, like all believers of *faithful character*, was given a responsibility to fulfill. People of biblical character incline, by faith, toward the responsibility of *the spiritual watchman*. "Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel, whenever you hear a word from my mouth, warn them from Me" v.17.

#4. The character of the watchmen does not represent the immediate culture, the surrounding sociology nor the regularities distilled from human experience. It represents the Almighty. In the Christian way of life character is the servant of the Creator.

#5. Being asked by the Lord to "warn" carries some significant consequences. The watchman tries to disrupt the oneness between the sins of the people --> and their character, before it is too late.

#6. Such a personal character is not at home with the godlessness of society. The foundation of biblical character is the belief in a world beyond time. It trusts in what it cannot see, but knows is there.

#7. Those of the church should strive to fulfill the duty of the watchman. It brings revealed truth to bear on human conduct.

From Ezekiel 3. THE PREDISPOSING NATURE OF PERSONAL CHARACTER PART 5: NO COMPROMISE CHARACTER v.8, 9.

#1. Anyone defined by a biblical personal character, immediately stands in a state of permanent and profound contradiction to the world. This is a given. More than that, such a one stands in immediate contradiction to any other potential thought, speech and behavior.

#2. "Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads" v.8.

#3. That language stipulates the *direct involvement* of the Lord in the development of personal character. His involvement assures a non-marginal level of resistance to social magnitudes of influence.

#4. Ezekiel never ran scared from the majoritarian *culture of the fallen character*. They always make threats. The biblical personal character is not in the people-pleasing business. Ezekiel represents (in written form) human conduct, standing on revelation. This is inherently intrusive. Using the word of God, the preacher forecloses on the world character.

#5. "Like emery harder than flint I have made your forehead. Do not be afraid of them or be dismayed before them, though they are a rebellious house" v.9.

#6. Every believer is called to performance of duty, courage and unassailable character.