

Your Ezekiel Moment

A sermon delivered Sunday Morning, September 25, 2016
at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.
by S. Michael Durham
© 2016 Real Truth Matters

Ezekiel 24:15-24

Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 16 "Son of man, behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke; yet you shall neither mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down. 17 Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead; bind your turban on your head, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your lips, and do not eat man's bread of sorrow." 18 So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died; and the next morning I did as I was commanded. 19 And the people said to me, "Will you not tell us what these things signify to us, that you behave so?" 20 Then I answered them, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 21 'Speak to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul; and your sons and daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. 22 And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips nor eat man's bread of sorrow. 23 Your turbans shall be on your heads and your sandals on your feet; you shall neither mourn nor weep, but you shall pine away in your iniquities and mourn with one another. 24 Thus Ezekiel is a sign to you; according to all that he has done you shall do; and when this comes, you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.'"

There are many things we can say about the text but mainly and first: it's quite odd. This is a strange passage of Scripture. That God would come to His beloved servant and tell him that with one stroke He was going to take his wife from him is uncharacteristic of what we think of God. It's hard to imagine that He would take the delight of Ezekiel's eyes. She didn't die of a prolonged illness, or accident, all we know is that in a moment of time God took her.

To add to the puzzlement is the command God gave His servant Ezekiel not to mourn. For hundreds of years before Ezekiel and hundreds of years after, the Jewish mourning of loss of loved ones was quite public. At the moment of death, loud wailing and cries would be heard from the family and not just the family. People would hire themselves out as professional mourners.

The grieved family members would take dust and sometimes ashes from their fire pits and throw it over their heads. They would cover the lower part of their face, their mouth, with a veil. They would not put on hats or their turbans, they would douse their heads with dirt, signifying their lowliness and brokenness. Then they would fast until the evening meal when friends and family would come and bring them food called the Bread of Sorrow.

Here Ezekiel is told not to eat the food friends and family brought him, he was not to cover his mouth, he was not to even throw the ceremonial dirt and ashes on his head. He was to go about

his business as if nothing had happened. He wasn't even allowed to let one single tear to fall from his eye. If he was to sigh, he was to do it inwardly. If he was to mourn, he was to do it quietly in a way no one would recognize.

Would you not agree with me that this is a strange and odd text? Well, God is using Ezekiel as an example of what is about to take place with the people of Israel.

Nine years earlier, Nebuchadnezzar had come and ransacked Jerusalem. He didn't destroy it but he took thousands of Jerusalem citizens back to Babylon with him, that's probably when Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was taken. He dethroned Jehoiakim, the king, and took him back to Babylon and put Zedekiah, his uncle, on the throne of Judah.

On the very day of that Ezekiel's wife died, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem and besieged the city because Zedekiah the king rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. What is a siege? It is simply to surround a city with your army so that no one could come in or come out. Basically, you starved the city. You weakened it to the point the city was willing to surrender.

Thus, God made Ezekiel an example of what's about to happen when Jerusalem was sacked. For two years, Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to the city. For two years he patiently waited for the right moment to go into the city and level it. The people of Israel concluded that as long as the temple of God remained, God's favor was with the people, even though they had been carted off as exiles to a foreign land. They still could not believe that God would turn His back on Judah. Why? Because the delight of their eyes, the same terminology God used for Ezekiel's wife, the temple was to be destroyed. "Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul." As long as the temple stood, they maintained hope that God was still with them in spite of their idolatry and rebellion. God was going to destroy His own temple and show them that He, once and for all, that He had abandoned and forsaken them because they had first abandoned and forsaken the Lord.

They were not commanded to refrain from grieving as Ezekiel had been, but they would be in such shock that they would not be able to publicly display emotion. Two years after it was prophesied, Jerusalem fell and the temple was leveled. The people were in so much shock and horror about what had happened—which so contradicted what they believed—that they could not grieve.

Have you ever been so devastated by news that you couldn't weep, you couldn't hardly feel anything, you were just numb by the horrific tragedy? This is the sign of Ezekiel and his wife. This devastation, this terrible judgment on Jerusalem, so contrary to what they believed, that they would be so in much shock that they couldn't grieve.

But this is still a strange thing to think that God would take one of His choice obedient servants, who obeyed Him in the face of great opposition, and do this to him. Take his wife? That doesn't sound like God. How do we explain it?

Often when we come to passages like this, especially in the Old Testament, we just excuse it as being relegated to the Old Testament. We say this is the way God did things then. He acted strange and did odd things. But, of course, now that we're in the New Covenant age we say God doesn't do that anymore and we simply pass it off as some dispensational thing that was done many years ago.

Dearly beloved, that is not a suitable answer. The Bible tells us that God has not changed nor can He. There is no shadow of change, no variableness. The Bible says, "I am the Lord thy God, I change not." He has not changed. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. So how do we explain this?

You have to understand that the Bible is an unfolding revelation of God and His redemptive plan. You don't get it all in the first book. God, over the ages, disclosed more and more of who He is and what He's like, and His ways. So, in the earlier years of this book, we see God showing man first of all that He is holy—He is altogether different than us. He is not bound by us. He is not like any of us—so that He would say to Moses at the burning bush, "I Am that I Am."

You cannot point to anyone else and say, "God is like him. God is like her." No. He's altogether different. He cannot be described in His fullness. He is so different from all His creation that He is "holy." That's what the word *holy* means. He's completely separate from all that He has made. Nothing is like Him.

In His holiness He is perfectly good. His moral excellence exceeds the best person you've ever met. God is much better than the most holy man or woman you'll ever know. His moral purity exceeds the heavens. He is altogether good. He is altogether loving.

In the earlier portions of God's recorded Word, you don't see as much of that. You see a God of unbendable righteousness who is declaring that He is right and all of mankind is wrong. He says all of mankind has rebelled and therefore they have incurred the wrath of God and His judgment and that that is good. As you move through the sacred testimony of Scripture a few hundred years from the lightning and thundering as God came down from Mount Sinai to give the Law on stone tablets to Moses, we come to a man named David.

David broke the law of God by committing adultery and murdering the husband of the wife with whom he had an adulterous affair. According to the law there was no sacrifice for those two sins. There is no prescription for sacrifice in the law of God for murder or adultery. The only proper response to those two sins was to take those out who committed those sins and stone them, execute them immediately.

Yet, the prophet of God comes to David and points his finger into his face and says, "You have done this. You're the man. You have sinned against God. You have disgraced His name before the nations, but you will not die. You are forgiven." He says this so that David sees something of God that not even Moses saw altogether. This is progressive revelation. This is seeing more of God.

David would pen his prayer of repentance in Psalm 51 and say, “Burnt offerings and sacrifices Thou does not delight in, otherwise I would have offered them, but a broken and a contrite heart Thou will not despise.”

He saw something about the nature of God disclosed to him by the Spirit of God, the same Spirit that gave Moses those tablets of stone. By the time we move to the New Testament we see the fullest, most complete revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Why is that? Because He’s God manifested in the flesh. “And we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” In Jesus Christ bodily dwelt the fullness of the Godhead. In Christ the Godhead we see incarnate deity. Jesus said, “If you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father. You want to know what God is like? Here He is: Me!”

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Jesus came and God put on humanity so that we could see how God is in a tangible way and we could understand that all of those commandments, all of those strange, odd passages, somehow, somehow, make sense in Christ. They do.

We cannot relegate this to say, “Ah, well, this is just one of those Old Testament oddities and you just have to chalk it up to a different dispensation.” No. The Lord Thy God does not change.

Well, knowing we cannot use the Old Testament as an answer, some try to explain the oddities of Scripture chalking it up to the fact that we can’t understand because God is infinite and we are finite. He’s infinite and incomprehensible so who can know the Lord?

My dear friends, where is your holy, loving curiosity? That answer doesn’t satisfy. Just to simply pass God off and say, “Well, who can understand Him anyway? He’s so great and we’re so little so how can a human being understand Him?” I get what you’re saying. I believe that God is incomprehensible in all of His ways but I have a holy, loving curiosity to know more about Him. I’m not satisfied to just have my brain stacked and stuffed with a few facts and bits of information about Him. I love Him, therefore I want to know Him. Isn’t that the way love works?

Love always possesses a curiosity to pursue in knowledge the person you love. That’s what the whole courtship or dating process is all about. You’re falling in love and you want to know more about this person. This is one of the reasons why God has given us this beautiful thing called marriage. Marriage is the holy confines or place where spouses, especially husbands, can study and learn their wives. They can get a degree in the knowing and understanding of their wives. That’s what Peter said in I Peter 3, “Husbands, dwell with your wives in understanding.” It simply means it is the business of a husband to study his wife with a holy, loving curiosity. You figure her out. You say, “That’s an impossibility. You might as well try to figure out God than to figure out your wife.”

No, my dear friend, she is complex, yes, but you’ve got a lifetime. As long as God gives you life, she is to be the pursuit of your knowledge. You pursue her, know her, love her. Why? Because you love her. You want to know her. She fascinates you. You are delighted in her.

My friend, isn't that also true of God? Are you not in a living, vital relationship with Him? If you are, you want to know Him better. There is a curiosity. You aren't satisfied with the little that you know of Him. So you continue to pursue Him. Shall we not do that this morning? Or should we just chalk up this passage and say, "Well, God is simply beyond understanding. Who can know it?"

No. God has given us the New Testament. The New Testament is the lens by which we go back to the Old and interpret. It is the framework by which we understand and interpret the ways and the will of God in the Old Testament.

Therefore, what I would like to do for the remainder of our time is to suggest three New Testament passages to use like a magnifying glass and put over this text and thereby understand what's happening.

I. The Absolute Freedom of a Sovereign God

This first text is to help us have a proper attitude in approaching Ezekiel 24. We can't just be curious about what God is doing and why He is doing this to His beloved servant Ezekiel, we also have to approach it with the right frame of mind and a reverent heart. This passage will help us to do so.

"For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.' 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. 19 You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?'" (Romans 9:17-21)

The whole argument of the Apostle Paul is that God is sovereign and therefore He has absolute freedom to do whatever He wants within the framework of His own nature. God cannot act outside of His own nature. No one can, including God. There are certain things God cannot do. He cannot lie, He says. He cannot repent like a man repents. It's not in His nature to lie or change His mind whimsically and arbitrarily like a man does. Not at all. God is bound by His own nature. However, within the perimeters of His own nature He has absolute freedom to choose and do whatever He wants to do. You don't have that freedom nor do I.

We have certain freedoms to choose. You can, of your own freedom, choose according to your nature but within God's perimeters. Yes, you have the freedom to choose but you don't have absolute freedom to choose.

Paul is arguing the absolute freedom of a sovereign God and He uses some examples. He presupposes an objection coming from the Jewish audience of the book of Romans. He knows they will say to him, "Wait a minute. God made certain covenants with the Jewish people, the descendants of Abraham, why aren't they coming to pass?" Most of the children of Israel have rejected the Messiah. They did not believe and very few Jews were saved. Paul is addressing that question. He goes all the way back to the beginning of the ninth chapter and says, "Not all children of Israel

are descendants of Abraham. God, in His wisdom, has selected, chosen, certain ones out of the human race whom He will love and show His divine favor.”

This is a teaching and a doctrine that finds very few people accepting it. In fact, I say every person born chafes in disgust at this truth that God has absolute freedom to choose whom He wills to be saved and that whomever He does not choose He does not have to save. This is the whole point. Here, Paul is using Pharaoh as an example. God says of Pharaoh, “I have lifted him up for the distinct purpose to show My power, so that My name may be declared upon the whole earth. Therefore, I’m going to harden Pharaoh’s heart so that he will not let the people of Israel go and I will have to display my judgment and power upon his kingdom.” That’s exactly what God did.

Then Paul makes this astounding statement in verse 18, “Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.” It’s very clear. The text is not to be debated. There is no room for vacillation or discussion. Paul says it distinctly and clearly: God chooses to save some and He chooses some not to save.

How do you understand that? How do we explain this? It sounds so “unfair.”

Before I answer that, I want you to look at the objection itself. Paul states an objection in verse 19. This is what the reader is going to argue in rebuttal. Notice what the argument or objection assumes. It assumes that Paul’s statement is true. The objection doesn’t argue, “No, no, no, God cannot choose whom He wants to. It’s left up to man! It’s his choice. This isn’t about sovereign grace that selects and elects someone before the foundation of the world.” No, the objection isn’t that. The objector assumes that predestination is true.

He poses his question in verse 19.

“You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?’”

In other words, “Paul, we grant that you’re right. But in light of that statement that He will have mercy on whom He wills and harden whom He wills, how does God find fault in us? We’re simply doing what He created us to do. How can He judge anyone? How can He take Pharaoh and judge him and condemn him? He simply did what God made him to do.”

How do we answer this? Paul answers. It’s not an in depth explanation on the doctrine of election, the answer is God is absolutely free to do what He wants.

Let’s look at the question. Who has resisted His will? Who hasn’t done what God has made him to do? The question is about the fairness of God. That’s where this is all aimed, that God is not fair. The question challenges the fairness of God. Beloved, every challenge of Satan goes back to this point: God is not good. If God has absolute freedom to choose whom He will save and whom He will not save, then somehow this shows us that God is not good and cannot be trusted to do good. That’s the same line of attack the devil gave Eve in the Garden. “Yea, hath God said, Ye

shall not eat of every tree of the garden? . . . For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

The whole suggestion is that you can't trust God because God is not good to you. He's withholding His goodness. Beloved, God is absolutely free to do what He wants to do and what He wants to do is always good. This is what the Bible presents us about God.

I'm not going to get into the doctrine of election and try to defend it to you because the Apostle Paul doesn't, as we shall see in the next few moments, but let me give you something to think about. If you were to have, as most people conceive reality, two beings with absolute freedom to choose, who have different visions and goals, what would you have? Some religions have this. It's called a dualism. They have two opposing deities with equal ability to choose and freedom to do as they please. The problem is, with that conclusion, you make Satan equal to God and that is not so.

Satan is part of the creation of God just as you and I are. There has to be one being of all persons that has absolute ability to choose as He pleases, otherwise, you talk about chaos—you've never known chaos. If God is God, which He is, He has to have the ability to work and choose according to His perfect goodness and love. He must be unhindered.

The question that cuts to the heart: Can God be God and can you be happy with that?

There's the underlying problem. When we see things like Ezekiel being told by the Lord that he can't publicly mourn, it sounds so unfair, so unkind, so unloving, the heart chafes in disgust, and rebels against God. It reveals a lack of trust in His goodness.

Notice how Paul answers this. He argues from a position of creation.

But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?"

This is the great argument from the greatest theologian that's ever lived. You don't have this detailed explanation, you just have one argument: Cannot the Creator do with His creation what He wants to do? This is a powerful argument. A logical argument. An irrefutable argument. Who would deny any creator the right to do with his creation as he pleases.

Let's go to the potter, shall we? Let's go to the man who makes art out of clay. Isn't it the potter's privilege to put the clay on the wheel and form it in his or her vision, according to his or her desire? Since this is the very analogy the Apostle Paul uses, let us suppose that after the potter has formed the clay pot or jar and sets it off to the side to dry, that all of the sudden this clay jar has the ability to speak and speak it does. What if it said to the potter, "Listen, why didn't you make me a cup for a king rather than a chamber pot?"

Some of you don't know what a chamber pot is. It was a pot they put under the bed to use when they didn't have indoor plumbing. It's kind of a disgusting thought, isn't it? That was the only indoor bathroom there was. They would make pots and stick it under the bed.

Here is this chamber pot just made by the potter and it takes on the characteristics of a mouth and a voice and it says, "I object! Why didn't you make me a beautiful drinking vessel that a king would desire to drink from?" What would you think? If that was possible, which we know it isn't, the potter has the right to make out of it whatever he wants. Wouldn't you agree?

But clay jars do talk. Do you know what God made man out of? The dust of the earth. You're nothing but a clay pot and cracked at that. You're a cracked pot, pun intended. There he stood, a statue of clay, made by the ultimate Master Potter, who breathed into Adam His Spirit, and the Bible says man, the clay jar, could talk.

The analogy is appropriate. How can I, nothing but a collection of dust, ever assemble the wisdom and knowledge and power to out-argue God and demand my way? It's unthinkable. And it's the height of rebellion. God, as your maker, has the right to do with you what He so desires. If you say that sounds fatalistic and pessimistic, it is because you don't like that kind of God. Let me tell you about this Creator God—He is good and can do nothing but good. You can trust Him.

That brings me to the second passage we need to take out of the New Testament and bring it over to Ezekiel 24.

II. I Am Purchased with an Infinite Price

I want to tell you how good your God is. How good is this absolutely free God who can do what He pleases? Can He be trusted? Paul says He can.

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Your body, your spirit, your whole person, does not belong to you. You've been bought. You've been purchased. Just like anyone who buys any item and has the deed to that item, he has that right to do with the item as he pleases.

Why would God purchase you? There's only one reason. Because He loves you. How good is this God, who is absolutely free to do as He pleases? He loves you enough and He's so good that He would send Himself, His Son, to die. You are bought with a price. What is that price? It's the incorruptible blood of Jesus Christ. It cannot be corrupted. It is so pure, so holy, and with that holy blood you've been purchased.

This is hard to comprehend. For me, this is harder to comprehend than God's freedom to choose. I have no problem with God, as Creator, doing whatever He wants to do with anything He makes. But why He would He, for such worthless clay pots, give Himself and His Son to die?

Stop and think about this. Let's try to ponder a potential option. Why didn't God just give us another man, a holy man, a Moses, an Ezekiel and offer them or Samuel or Daniel up for our sacrifice? There are four men in the Old Testament with no stain or blot on their record. There was the man Enoch who walked with God and didn't die, God simply took him. Then there's Joseph and Samuel and Daniel. They have no sin recorded on their record. We know they weren't perfect for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but we know there is nothing recorded against them.

Why didn't God take one of them and offer them up as the sacrifice for us all? The answer is how could He—one man for the entire human race? He's a created thing dying for other created things. There's no equivalency in the end. It's just one cracked pot for another. *That* would be unfair. It would be totally unfair for one human being to suffer an eternal hell, not just die, but also suffer the wrath of God, which means eternal punishment forever and ever, for the remainder of us. One cracked pot for another doesn't work. How does that demonstrate the love of God?

Let's go to a higher created order. Let's select the highest angel above. Certainly God could have taken the life and spirit of an angel and offered it up as a price for our redemption for those He has chosen to save. Wouldn't that have been sufficient? The answer, once again, is that an angel is a created being as well. How would that angel's life tell you how much God loved you? To some degree it tells me God loves me enough to sacrifice part of His beautiful creation for me. But does it tell you the extent of God's love? Does it give you a true glimpse of how much you're loved? Not at all.

Therefore, in the triune counsels of eternity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit devised a plan not just to die to redeem you but to tell you how much He loves you. The plan involved God Himself. God in man dying for sinful people. Oh, the Gospel has become so familiar with us sometimes it loses its power. May God in this moment help you understand that God was not just content to cover your sins. He could have continued for centuries more and millennia with bulls and goats to at least cover the sin but He wanted to also demonstrate how much He loved you. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

God said, "I will go. Me, the infinite, eternal God, shall come and be a man and in the man I shall die." How do you explain that moment on the cross as the Man Christ Jesus, God Himself, hangs there, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Luther pondered that, he thought for hours about that as he stared out the window and all he could say was, "God forsaking God, who can understand this?" But I tell you this—here is something you can learn from that—that's how much God loves you.

That's how good God is. That's how much God loves you. That the eternal, all-great, all-sufficient Creator would die for the rebel, for the sinful, for the flawed, for the vile. And die He did. I'll even use the word that's been thrown around in the public arena lately: *deplorable*. We are the basket of deplorables, all of us. This has nothing to do with republicans or democrat, we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. I am deplorable. My rebellion has no excuse or justification.

It was for us that God said, "Nothing less than My best and My best is Me. I will go and suffer." You are bought. That means you have agreed that a sovereign God with absolute freedom can do whatever He wants to do with you. You've agreed to this. That's the terms of surrender. That's the conditions of the new birth and life with God—yielding. I'm not my own, I'm bought with a price. My life isn't up to me to decide. I'm here to be used by Him according to purposes I may not understand. That's okay, I don't need to understand because I know how much He loves me.

Listen. I may be deplorable and worthy of hell but in the eyes of God I'm an object of value. I'm worth something to my God. What am I worth? Evidently quite a bit. More than we could understand. He doesn't look at you as a basket of deplorables. He looks at you and sees His Son in whom He delights. "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

There are times as God's son when I think, "He can't say that about me." But His salvation is so amazing that He can.

So we bring this to the passage. We have a God who can do to Ezekiel and his wife whatever he wants to do but more than that, Ezekiel is part of this blood-bought redeemed. He's a part of this. He can do with Ezekiel what He wants to do and what He wants to do is what is best for Ezekiel and incorporates him into His eternal plan.

Let me ask you a question. We all want to live a comfortable, easy, wonderful life. We want to have the best things, but what is truly the best? Having the best things or being yielded to God who does all things well? Being a part of the eternal program He instituted before creation. You want your life to count? Nothing could make your life count more than being obedient and in unity to the Father and His ultimate plan for your life.

One more passage.

III. The Sufficiency of God's Grace

We're going to end with this and pick up in this text next week, Lord willing, and really unpack it for another reason besides the text in Ezekiel.

What can I take out of this text and use as a lens with Ezekiel? The sufficiency of God's grace.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8

Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

"My grace is sufficient for you." You cannot read Ezekiel 24 without this text. You must understand and believe that whatever God asks, even of those Old Testament saints, even of Ezekiel losing his wife, that God gives what is needed to endure and glorify Him. God's grace is absolutely sufficient for you.

Do you know what God's grace is? Most often, and I think wrongly, we think of God's grace as some influence or power that God gives us. But it isn't. It works as an influence but it's not an influence or power or inanimate. What is grace? It is God Himself.

It is God's activity in you giving you the desire and the power to do what you cannot do for yourself. That's what God's grace is. It's God working in you. As Paul said, "To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily" (Colossians 1:29). That's what grace is. Grace is God going to work in you to create the desire and give you the power to do as He pleases, which you could not do on your own.

When He says, "My grace is sufficient," He's literally saying, "I'm sufficient. I'm the One that's sufficient and I can work in you to give you both the desire and the power to do even things that seems so difficult. I will be there and I will be there in such a way that I will be working so that you will be hand in hand with Me and you will be glad for your weakness."

If we really understood this passage, every one of us would be standing up and shouting at the tops of our voices. "Here I am, do whatever You want to do with me. YES! Because Your activity in my life is sufficient."

Friends, there will be Ezekiel moments in your life and all of the theological jargon and clichés will not help. "Well, God's sovereign," and "All things work together for good for those that love God and are called according to His purposes," are really going to be like water off a duck's back. It's not really going to have impact when you're really, really, really hurting.

But when you take all three of these truths—the absolute freedom of a sovereign God; that you were bought with an incorruptible, inestimable price; and that God's grace is sufficient for you—you can weather your Ezekiel moments. When God does strange things in your life that doesn't seem fair and when He seems to be a million miles away, you can remain rock-solid and consistent. It doesn't mean you don't have tremors of the heart. It doesn't mean your faith doesn't sometimes take a nosedive. But you go through it believing that God has the right to do with you whatever He wants. And doubly so, not just because you're His creation but because He bought you with the blood of His Son and He's promised to avail Himself in you as grace working in you

His activity, giving you the desire and the power to do what you could not do by yourself—His good pleasure.

That's how Ezekiel was able to weather his moment and that's how you'll be able to weather your Ezekiel moments and actually delight in it. See, Ezekiel didn't have half the knowledge you and I have. He didn't know any of those three passages because they hadn't been written yet. I could have understood why the prophet would have rebelled and, like Jonah, run off to a faraway place. But he submitted, with what limited knowledge he had, why should we not today once again stand up and say, "Yes, do with me as You please. I am exhilarated, I am enthused, I am excited to be used by God to work by His grace." Amen.