

EZEKIEL

Cry Me a River

*By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down,
yea, we wept When we remembered Zion
Psalm 137:1*

Text

Ezekiel 3:1-21

Topic

The LORD readies Ezekiel for his ministry to hard-hearted Jews by
“making his forehead strong... Like adamant stone”

Title

“The Fantastic Fore-head”

I’ve always been a skeptic when it comes to the head-butt as a fighting technique.

Seems it would hurt me as much as it would my opponent.

Turns out that’s not true - not if you perform the head-butt properly. Michael Rayburn, in a column for *Police Magazine*, wrote, “One only need look back at soccer’s World Cup series of 2006 and the devastating head butt delivered by French player Zinedine Zidane to Italy’s Marco Materazzi to realize how effective this tactic really is.” He head-butted him in the chest and Materazzi went down hard.¹ *He might still be down!*

Don’t rock back and broadcast your head butt. Instead, compress and launch. Use the crown of your head and go for the bridge of the nose.

Hands down the best ever head-butter has got to be the prophet Ezekiel.

¹ <https://youtu.be/vF4iWIE77Ts?si=kzvY7EWFv5fPT5B4>

He was given a divine advantage. The LORD said to him, "Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads. Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead..." (3:8-9).

Ezekiel would butt heads with Israelites who were "impudent [brazen] and hard-hearted" (v7). They would "not listen to [Ezekiel], because they [would] not listen to [the LORD]" (v7).

Are the majority today listening to the Lord? They're not listening to us, either. Brazen & hard-hearted would be an understatement.

We need to be more hard-headed...Hard-headed overcomes hard-hearted

I'll organize my comments around two points:

**#1 You Are A Hard-Headed Watchman
Who Hears & Receives God's Word**

**#2 You Are A Hard-Headed Watchman
Who Hears & Repeats God's Word**

**#1 You Are A Hard-Headed Watchman
Who Hears & Receives God's Word
(v1-15)**

Before there was Logan, there was Perseus.

He was tasked with killing Medusa. One of the divine gifts he was given to kill her was an *adamantine* sword. It was made from a substance known as *adamant*. In modern comics, it's the stuff that they added to Logan to make him Wolverine. Only they call it *adamantium*. I guess that makes Ezekiel the first X-Man. He was spiritually infused with *adamant* to perform his prophetic tasks.

Ezk 3:1 Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."

Ezk 3:2 So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll.

Ezk 3:3 And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you." So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness.

Three of God's prophets were commanded to eat God's Word - Jeremiah, John, & Ezekiel. I am definitely in the minority, but I like to think they really ate the scrolls. If that's a little too literal, I can live with it being a metaphor for our being fortified in the inner man by God's Word.

H.A. Ironside is a Bible commentator you want to read. He has an interesting take on this. He says the phrasing indicates that Ezekiel took in the portion but didn't swallow at first. Ezekiel *chewed on it*.

There is value in reading large portions of Scripture, and in reading through the entire Bible in a period of time. Do not neglect waiting on the Lord over a shorter passage for Him to reveal its treasures to you. Read it over & over... Pray before, during, and after... Jot down notes... Consult a Bible reference book, like a Bible dictionary, for things you need defined. Only then reach for a commentary.²

Ezk 3:4 Then He said to me: "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.

Ezk 3:5 For you *are* not sent to a people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, *but* to the house of Israel,

Ezk 3:6 not to many people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, had I sent you to them, they would have listened to you.

Ezk 3:7 But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel *are* impudent and hard-hearted.

Ezekiel is in exile, having been forcibly removed from Judah during the second siege by the invading Babylonians. The LORD has come to him in a whirlwind on His throne-chariot, borne by four mighty Cherubim. He is being 'called' - drafted - for his ministry among the captives.

How many times does the LORD say "the house of Israel?" Four. The title refers to the unified nation composed of the 12 tribes. After King Solomon died, the nation of Israel split in two. The Northern Kingdom was called Israel, and the Southern Kingdom was called Judah. The Northern Kingdom was conquered and its tribes dispersed about 200 years before Ezekiel prophesied to Judah.

In his conspicuous usage of "house of Israel," Ezekiel is putting us on notice that there are no lost tribes. The LORD would regather all Jews from every tribe back home.

² Try it this week. Let's all take this deep dive into Revelation 3:7-13, Jesus' letter to the church in Philadelphia.

He did it, by the way; or at least it has begun.

Ezekiel would have a language barrier among his own people. We see this in our families & places of business. Go on a mission trip, and even with the language barrier you have greater success than you do at Thanksgiving.

Why send Ezekiel when the LORD could foresee their continued hardness? The LORD was playing the long game. Subsequent generations would see Him striving with their ancestors, out of love. His love manifests in giving us His light in order that we might receive His life.

Ezk 3:8 Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads.

Ezk 3:9 Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they *are* a rebellious house."

This reads like a superhero origins story. What do we want to call him? Ironhead... Skull Crusher... Steel Brow... Head Strong?

Ezk 3:10 Moreover He said to me: "Son of man, receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears.

Ezk 3:11 And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' whether they hear, or whether they refuse."

It's time we zero-in on what we mean by hardheaded. *It involves hearing, receiving, and speaking.*

"Hear with your ears" sounds a lot like "he who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says." We sometimes describe people as having an 'ear' for music. Having "an ear for something" suggests a heightened auditory perception or sensitivity.

There are over 120 million radio receivers in cars now. It's a clunky illustration, but God the Holy Spirit indwelling you is a receiver for God's Word, transmitting it to our hearts.

"Speaking" includes more than words. It is words *and* actions that reveal our affections and worldview. Your worldview is the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual filter you use to experience, interpret, and respond to reality. Possessing a Biblical worldview

implies that your ideas about all aspects of life and eternity derive from Scriptural principles and commands.

Hardheaded believers are tuned-in to God's Word by the indwelling Holy Spirit. It sets the dial to a Christian worldview that doesn't back-down from secular criticism. We have an answer for every man. We are in that way hard-heads... But tenderhearted.

Ezk 3:12 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: "Blessed *is* the glory of the LORD from His place!"

Ezk 3:13 I also *heard* the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, and a great thunderous noise.

The ISV and other translations read, "Then the Spirit lifted me up and I heard a great earthquake behind me and the glory of the LORD arose from his place." The LORD's chariot is take-your-muffler-off loud.

Ezk 3:14 So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

Ezekiel experiences a horizontal 'rapture' from one place to another. This was apparently quite common in the Old Testament among prophets. There are several passages that nonchalantly mention Elijah was a frequent flyer.

In the NT, Philip baptizes the Ethiopian official, and "the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away... [and] Philip was found at Azotus" (Acts 8:39-40).

The Word of the LORD can be described as "bitter" in that it reveals many hard truths about life, death, and life after death.

John Gill commented, "*In the heat of my spirit [means] 'in the indignation of my spirit; his spirit was hot and angry, he was froward and unwilling to go on the errand, to prophesy sad and dismal things to his people.'*"

Ezk 3:15 Then I came to the captives at Tel Abib, who dwelt by the River Chebar; and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

He wasn't commiserating with them in their distress. "Appalled" is a better word than "astonished." As we progress we will see the prideful, unrepentant attitude of the exiles.

I want to be described as a believer who 'has an ear' for God the Holy Spirit. I began in the Spirit; I want to continue with Him.

Don't start Google-ing for "how to have an ear to hear." You'll discover thousands of websites & blogs, each with their own 3 or 5 or 10 steps.

We recommend immersion.

'Immersion' in language learning is a method where you learn a language by being surrounded by it in everyday situations, using it constantly to speak, listen, read, and write. You might move in with a family that speaks only the language you want to learn. You might even move to another country.

I don't know what immersion in the Holy Spirit looks like **for you**. It will involve these four things: Prayer... Bible study... Fellowship in a local Church... Telling others about Jesus.³

Immerse yourself in those things and over the course of your time on Earth, and you will develop your "ear to what the Spirit says."

#2 You Are A Hard-Headed Watchman Who Hears & Repeats God's Word (v16-21)

Nothing mysterious about a "watchman." He attentively looks out from his tower and sees to the safety of the people.

Ezk 3:16 Now it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Ezk 3:17 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me:

Ezekiel showed-up suddenly. He uttered not a word for a full week. It's an appropriate prequel to his often odd ministry.

³ Acts 2:42

Ezk 3:18 When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

Ezk 3:19 Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

Ezk 3:20 "Again, when a righteous *man* turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.

Ezk 3:21 Nevertheless if you warn the righteous *man* that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul."

Among the exiles were wicked & righteous individuals. We would say, unbelievers & believers:

1. The unbelievers go on in their sin despite God warning them.
2. The believers are tried and proven through trials, here called "stumbling blocks," to exhibit their love for the LORD. (Think Job).

Upon first reading, there seems to be an urgency for Ezekiel to act as their watchman.

Urgency is not one of the lessons here.

1. First, we would note that Ezekiel said *absolutely nothing* for seven days.
2. Second, we are going to see that for the next *two years* his ministry will take place at his home. He only ministers to people who come to him.

While taking nothing away from the urgency of sharing God's Word, we don't need to be whipped up into a frenzy by something God is *not* telling Ezekiel to do.

Chuck Missler's take on this - Ezekiel needs to be **faithful to his calling**. If that sounds watered-down, faithfulness is much harder than you think.

We are understandably concerned about the LORD telling Ezekiel if he fails in sharing God's Word that "his blood I will require at your hand."

There is a legal principle here that we don't recognize, but a Jew would.

The Law of God deals with "blood-guiltiness."

Blood-guilt is the accountability one bears for causing the death of another person, whether directly (murder) or indirectly (manslaughter). The one who sheds blood is held responsible and is considered guilty before God and the community.

Capital punishment was required for intentional murder. Fleeing to a city of refuge offered a merciful solution for manslaughter. A trial would be held, and if the death was ruled accidental, the perpetrator was not executed, but remained in exile in a city of refuge until the current High Priest died.

Ezekiel had not begun his ministry. This is still part of his calling. The LORD, therefore, was telling Ezekiel that his ministry of sharing the Word was a matter of life & death. He would be stained with blood-guiltiness **should he refuse or later reject his calling.**

Remember from verse fourteen that, "his spirit was hot and angry, he was froward and unwilling to go on the errand, to prophesy sad and dismal things to his people." The LORD wasn't giving Ezekiel a choice to volunteer. If Ezekiel refused, he would be considered a murderer or a man-slayer.

God can bring the hammer down on His prophets when He calls upon them. Think Jonah!

Our calling & commission is the Great Commission:

"All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on Earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

It is a serious calling. The apostle Paul remarked, "Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel! ... I have been entrusted with a stewardship" (First Corinthians 9:16 & 18).

What does the Bible say is required of stewards? To be faithful. You and I are to be faithful in our own callings.

Get this through your head: Be faithful in your calling.