

**COME  
HOLY  
SPIRIT**



# Sermon Growth Guide

**June 12, 2022**

**Sear Our Conscience**



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## **Come Holy Spirit – Sear Our Conscience**

### **Ezekiel 33:1-11**

**Key Verse:** Ezekiel 33:11 “Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?’”

**Big Idea:** The Spirit of God sears our conscience, desiring that we live and not die.

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### **Foundations**

Are you in relationship with someone who seems to have lost their moral compass? Is the American culture morally aware?

Do you wrestle with moral decisions you make? If you don't, take warning! In the here and now, we all fall short of God's righteousness. And God sends us His Spirit to guide and guard us, to sear our conscience that we might know the way of God and walk in it.

In this way, the Spirit acts as a watchman for God's people. How else can God's people be the salt of the earth and the light of the world than if God is leading us, prompting us, correcting us? God's Word, Spirit and people should all be constants in our lives if we are to heed God's guidance.

In turn, God's people, His bride, acts as a watchman to the nations. How else are we to fully live into our identity as ambassadors unless we are clearly heralding, and with great integrity, the place to which we ultimately belong, the Kingdom of God?

Open your time together in prayer. Ask God that the Spirit's shepherding of your lives might be even more explicit to you. Pray that you be given in greater measure the gift of a soft heart tuned to the righteousness of God.

### **Understanding God's Word**

Together, read Ezekiel 33:1-11.

What is the watchman held accountable for in verse 6? What should the watchman have done?

Are we to receive Ezekiel's charge to be a watchman as our own charge today? Why or why not? Are God's people responsible to point to the coming of the Lord?

What do we learn about the heart of God in verse 11?

### **Applying God's Word**

The Spirit of God sears our conscience, desiring that we live and not die. However, if we develop a habit of ignoring God's voice in our life, we can become deaf to God's prompting.

Host a discussion on how you are doing in listening to the Spirit's guidance. How can you join God in cultivating a sensitive spirit to the ways of the Kingdom?

### **Witnessing God's Word**

How is God calling you to be a watchman to the yet-believers around you? What does this mean and what does this not mean regarding your responsibility toward those on your mind?

Have any of you ever made a mistake? I have. Once when I was younger... No, I do. All the time. Now, when you made that mistake, did anyone warn you not to do it? Did you do it anyway? What if the person who was warning you had done a better job? What if they had actually stood in your way? Sometimes people do this sort of thing. They intervene. They take the keys out of the hand of someone who has had too many. They remove the guns from the house. They successfully stop the wrongdoer in their tracks. But, the truth is, if they had stood in your way you probably would have just walked around. God gives us a gift in the Holy Spirit within us. God uses the Holy Spirit to **Sear Our Conscience**.

As we move through this series, one of my hopes is that we understand more about how the Holy Spirit works and what the Holy Spirit does. One catalogue of the Holy Spirit's work is the last part of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting." That's not a bullet list of things to believe, but a list of things we believe the Holy Spirit makes happen. The Holy Spirit gives birth to the 'catholic' (universal) church. The Holy Spirit binds believers together in the communion of saints. Forgiveness of sins is applied to us by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who has the power of resurrection— "the Spirit him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you" says Romans 8:11. The Spirit is the giver of eternal life. But there are more things too.

Last week we talked a bit about the Word of God. The Word of God written is the Bible. The Holy Spirit inspired these Scriptures and accompanies them through time and history helping the faithful reader to understand and receive the Word of God. "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though

human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21). The Spirit inspired the Scriptures, and now helps us hear and receive them as the Word of God.

The Spirit is also our guide. The Holy Spirit walks with us and guides us through life. Isaiah said: "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" (Isaiah 30:21). If you put your faith in Jesus Christ, he sends His Spirit to live in you. Jesus told His disciples it was better for them that He leave and go to heaven so He could send the Holy Spirit, and they could have the Lord with them, within them, wherever they go. "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13). And this is important, because it reminds us that the Spirit will not guide us away from Jesus, away from the Father, or away from the Word that has already been inspired and written under the direction of the Spirit. There is agreement and consistency in God. The Son is faithful to the Father. The Spirit is faithful to the Son. There is no daylight between their positions or opinions or authority. Equal and the same; one God in three Persons. The Holy Spirit is a guide. When we pray Come Holy Spirit, we want to pray for the Spirit to sear our conscience to prod us along.

Ezekiel uses the image of the watchman. The watchman has responsibility for more than himself. This is a warning guard, out on post. When trouble comes, and it comes for us all from time to time, the job of the watchman is to sound the warning. Sound the trumpet and warn the people, that's all. But if you don't do it, it's your responsibility. That's reasonable, isn't it? The watchman asleep at the post is responsible for whatever happens. But if the watchman blows the trumpet and the people do nothing about the approaching disaster, the watchman is not to blame. It's the foolish people who are to blame for



their own destruction. But this isn't about wars, fires or earthquakes. This is about eternal salvation.

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, 'You wicked person, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the wicked person to turn from their ways and they do not do so, they will die for their sin, though you yourself will be saved" (Ezekiel 33:7-9). It's not the sweetest little passage of Scripture, is it? But it's real. It's real. What is your sense of responsibility for your lost neighbor? At the end of their days, they will breathe their last. They will die, and they will be judged—either for eternal life in Jesus Christ, or eternal separation from God in everlasting death. Did you warn them? Did I? Let the end of it not come with us feeling regret over some lack of courage or waning conviction, some memory of when the Spirit prompted and we shied away, shrank back, and retreated to our phone. This is the heavy conviction of the watchman in Ezekiel.

But I want to pivot back to the Spirit. Come Holy Spirit. The passage is not only about the responsibility of the watchman, but the guilt and regret of the people who have not followed in God's way. The world says sin is fun. The Bible says sin hurts you. I leave it to you to decide, but these people to whom Ezekiel ministered so many years ago, their sin hurt. "Son of man, say to the Israelites, 'This is what you are saying: 'Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?'" (Ezekiel 33:10). David had written the same in Psalm 32. "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer" (Psalms 32:3-4). Sin is heavy. Grievous sins are grievously heavy. But here comes the turn. "Say to them, 'As

surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?'" (Ezekiel 33:11). God doesn't want you to collapse and die. God does want you to turn.

Turn. This is repentance. This is the changing of mind. This is resolving with all you have, I call on the Lord as my help and my redeemer, I will no longer walk that road. I will no longer go that way. I'm getting off this infernal train and I'm turning toward Jesus. The Lord wants that. The Lord calls for that. The Lord will help you and sustain you and tax every star to empower you to find new life. Come Holy Spirit and sear my conscience. That's the Spirit talking in your life. The Spirit within you despises your continuous adventures into sin and error. God hates to see you waste yourself in that stuff. But you are free to do it. Even as a child of God, as a believer, you have the freedom to still walk in sin and error and selfish desires and all that muck. It grieves the Lord to see it. That's why we get the encouragement, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). I mean, if you think about it, the Holy Spirit is in you. When you choose willfully to sin, you drag the Holy Spirit through that experience with you.

The Holy Spirit sears your conscience. What does that mean? Your conscience, that little voice, you can follow it, or you can ignore it. Like the watchman's cry, it comes. You are the one who either hears it and responds, or ignores it to your peril. See that? And when the Holy Spirit is the one speaking to your conscience, when it is the Holy Spirit talking to your spirit, here's the thing, if you ignore it and choose to go your own way instead, your conscience grows calloused. It goes senseless and numb. You don't feel the prick of conscience anymore. You don't hear the faint trumpet sound of warning anymore. You need the Spirit of God to burn through all that, to sear your



conscience again. Look, have you ever given advice to someone and watched them ignore it? Did you give them more advice? Maybe. But nobody likes to keep giving ignored advice. The Holy Spirit speaks to us, guides us, prods us. If we turn and respond, then it is like the parable says, we will grow—"you have been faithful over a little; now be faithful over much." But if we ignore it, our hearts and minds and consciences grow calloused and hardened, and cynicism and sarcasm and numbness win the day.

So we pray again, "come Holy Spirit." Awaken in me again the soft heart and open mind to hear your voice, to hear your watchman call, and to turn and trust you and find life. "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19). Repentance isn't a shame deal. Repentance is a restoration deal, a new life deal. C. S. Lewis said, "Progress means getting nearer to the place you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turn, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man." When you are on the wrong road, the only thing to do is to turn around.

We need the Holy Spirit to sear our conscience. We won't stop making mistakes. We won't stop choosing the wrong over the right. But we can shorten the steps down the wrong road when we pray for a soft and responsive soul to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the Word. We need that. Every time we take a wrong turn, we lose a bit of ourselves. But every time we are tempted and resist, or we take a few steps in the wrong direction then obey the Spirit and turn around, every time that happens, we become a little more like Christ and a little more what we were always meant to be.

The shootings continue across our nation. There are many who say the nation has lost its conscience. As a

people, have we lost our responsiveness to God, who loves us and does not want to see us die, or kill, or destroy ourselves in all the horrible ways we do? Have we lost our national conscience? John Adams said, "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." We have plenty of reason to wonder if we are still a moral and religious people at all. Maybe there is no right and wrong, only people doing what is right in their own eyes. Cal Thomas wrote an opinion piece after the Robb Elementary shooting reminding his readers that we used to teach right and wrong in schools and the wisdom that comes with the fear of the Lord. Now we produce men and women whose strongest convictions are only that there is no right or wrong, whose only commitment to virtue is that there is no virtue. We need the watchman. We need the voice of the Spirit. Come Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit comes into our lives as a guide, helping our conscience hear right and wrong. When we willfully ignore him and choose a path of disobedience, we become deadened and numb, deaf to God's guidance. God does not chase us down the road begging. But the minute we will turn again, the Holy Spirit is there to renew our conscience and guide our path. Imagine having no guide? This is a great mercy of God, who takes no pleasure in seeing us fulfill our own destructive tendencies. So God says, "Turn." But that's not all God does. God sends His Son to run in front of us. Ultimately, Jesus is our watchman and the one who takes our place. Jesus sees the road we take in our willful disobedience and fault. He sees the destructive end we tilt ourselves toward, like deaf citizens ignoring all the warnings. He sees that we are destined to die. Jesus runs ahead to the end of the road. He takes the consequences of sin when He carries His cross to the hill. Jesus takes the death at the end of our road so we can turn around and make it home.

