

For the most part our natural inclination is to pick the easier, more comfortable, and more glorious jobs if we have the choice and avoid the tough ones. Maybe, on the golf-course grounds crew, it's between sitting on a fairway mower for a few hours or weed-whipping sand traps until you have all the skin on your legs sandblasted (free exfoliation). Maybe, at home, it's between cleaning and wiping down the windows or scrubbing and cleaning the toilet. Maybe, at church, it's making a phone call to that new member who is on fire to help out in any way they can or making a call to a member who has a bone to pick with something or some one, maybe even pastor. God prepares his followers to carry his Word and serve whether the job is comfortable or tough. Jesus was rejected in Nazareth when he proclaimed the Word of God. Paul was imprisoned again for preaching the gospel and awaited his death. As we listen to God's Word to his prophet Ezekiel, learn with him to take up the tough jobs because:

God has prepared you for tough jobs.

- 1) It's His good work despite the rejection rate.**
- 2) Don't be afraid. His Word never fails and His Spirit goes with you.**

"He said to me, 'Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.'" As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' And whether they listen or fail to listen – for they are a rebellious people – they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious people. You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious."

God has prepared you for tough jobs. It is his good work regardless of the rejection rate. God warned Ezekiel. *He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn.* This sounds like a tough job with a lot of rejection. God has revealed his will. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy that God wants all to be saved, *"This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:4). And God's Word tells us, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son"* (John 3:16). But here God also warns Ezekiel that many will reject his message and that rejection will be hard. God sent him to a people who had consistently rejected God and separated themselves from him throughout their history. This wasn't a momentary lapse on their part, but willful obstinance – hard heads and hard hearts. Knowing that rejection will happen doesn't make it easier, but God helps us not become despondent because of it. It was God's good work for Ezekiel.

It's God's good work for us too to talk about his love and his will to others. He hasn't called us to put on sandwich boards and accuse people or be weird. He has called us to love one another and fill out our vocations in our day-to-day lives as we apply his Word while we are at work, at home, at school, not just at church. We are to be prepared to *"give the reason for the hope we have."* We are to *"speak the truth in love."* We are to rebuke an erring brother or sister in Christ *"just between the two of you,"* and that includes in our own household. But this isn't easy. And rejection hurts most from people you love and hold in high esteem whether at home, work, or friends. This is why we sometimes fail to say anything at all. We let fear shut our mouths. Sometimes we even join in the sin or are led into sin because of it. Rejection isn't just tough, it's something we fear so much we have sinfully avoided conversations to share the gospel or to lovingly rebuke a brother to avoid it. And Ezekiel no doubt had the same temptations.

God calls Ezekiel *"son of man"* over 80 times. It's a humbling reminder. We are not equal with God nor do we get to call the shots when it comes to who God's Word is for or who it isn't. God exposes our own our arrogance, pride, glory-seeking, and our unhealthy desire for only the comforts and approval of this world rather than from God and service to our Savior and love for our fellow man, His good work.

Maybe that's why Jesus loved to refer to himself as "Son of Man." The Pharisees and teachers of the law would blow a gasket if he referred to himself as he truly is, *"the Son of God,"* but *"Son of Man"* fits too. Jesus humbled himself to take on flesh, be born of a virgin, and grow up the son of a carpenter, or so it was

thought. In love for God and love for us he faced rejection. He faced rejection for living a godly life in service to God and mankind. He faced rejection for reaching out in love to the tax collectors and sinners whom he came to save and bring back. He faced rejection for reaching out and calling out the self-righteous. All this he did for us and for Ezekiel – living the perfect life God demands of each one of us so that we can be credited with it and called “children of God.” And he faced the ultimate rejection not just from man when he suffered in our place on the cross, but God forsook his own Son so that he could accept us. And by Jesus’ resurrection we have the certainty that our sins are forgiven, God is our Father and we his children, heaven is our home and we have nothing to be afraid of. **God has prepared you for tough jobs. It is his good work regardless of the rejection rate.** We want to do that work.

Don’t be afraid. His Word never fails and His Spirit goes with you. “Say to them, “*This is what the Sovereign LORD says. And whether they listen or fail to listen – for they are a rebellious people – they will know that a prophet has been among them.*” ...*And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious people. You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious.*

Mike Rowe hit a chord with much of America when his tv program “Dirty Jobs” hit prime time viewing. He found some of the dirtiest, most difficult, even disgusting jobs that people do on the farm, in the city and under the city. He went along and tried to keep up with the men and women who did this stuff every day because it needed to be done and it helped people and kept the economy moving. Ezekiel’s work was scary and he faced a lot of rejection and threats. Twice God says, “*Don’t be afraid of them or their words.*” Rejection is hard to hear and face. It comes from people you may even know and love. Jesus’ own hometown rejected him – no doubt that was friends, former co-workers, customers, and the like. Much of his own family initially didn’t believe in him until after his resurrection. Paul sat in prison, cold, waiting for Timothy to bring his jacket and scrolls. It’s not an easy life to follow Jesus and do **the tough jobs**, but it’s worth it, and God sends you. Why? Because he loves you and he loves all people. He never stops holding out his arms to bring people back to himself.

So **don’t be afraid. His Word never fails.** Ezekiel’s prophecies were fulfilled. God made sure of it. God keeps his promises to you. He already has our eternity wrapped up for us. We are safe in Jesus no matter what. God has prepared you to face rejection for his Word and his name. **Don’t be afraid. His Word never fails and His Spirit goes with you.**

As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. By God’s grace he sends his Spirit to Ezekiel to enter him and lift him up to his feet and enable him to hear and understand what God says. When God gives a promise, his power and Spirit will be with you. The Holy Spirit works through means of grace, the Gospel message in Word and Sacrament. God continues to work through his Word – inspired by God, inerrant with no mistakes, and infallible so it never ever fails or falls short, to grow us and change us. We receive his Word through hearing and reading it. We receive the sacrament of baptism once as the water and God’s name is poured and pronounced over us and our sins are washed away and we are clothed with Christ, given new identity. We receive the Lord’s Supper as we often come to the Lord’s table to receive his body and blood at the altar given and poured out for the forgiveness of sins. We receive God’s forgiveness. This strengthens us to not be afraid, to go, live, share, serve. We don’t go alone. God’s Spirit goes with us to weed whip the sand traps, clean the toilet and have the tough conversations, *speaking the truth in love, rebuking between the two, and giving the reason for the hope we have.* **God has prepared you for tough jobs. It is his good work regardless of the rejection rate. Don’t be afraid. His Word never fails and His Spirit goes with you.**