



Ezekiel 33:30-33

(30) Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. (31) And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. (32) And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. (33) And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

King James Version

What Ezekiel describes happens frequently. People [love](#) to hear a good sermon and to be entertained. They enjoy the oratory or perhaps the speaker himself and his style of speaking. Some preachers use a good deal of humor and have the audience laughing throughout their sermons, as if they are stand-up comedians. One could have a great time at church.

The prophet describes it like going to a concert. Everyone enjoys good music, but after the music stops and the audience leaves the concert hall, what lasting effect does it have? [God](#) says that is how His people treat Him. They desire to hear what God has to say, but they want to be entertained more than instructed.

In Ezekiel's day, they wanted to see the prophet lie down on his side for 390 days. They wanted to know what kind of strange stunt God would have Ezekiel do next. Who knows? Maybe he would string himself up by his toes for a week or two until God spoke to him again! Undoubtedly, there were some who approached his ministry that way, as a kind of carnival act.

Perhaps they said to one another, "I wonder what God will have Ezekiel do next? I bet He'll have him hopping around his tent on one foot." They did not make the connection that what Ezekiel did portrayed what God would do to Israel. The people, by and large, merely came around for the spectacle of it.

Maybe Ezekiel was a good speaker, too. Perhaps he could really "give it to 'em." Some people love hell-fire-and-brimstone sermons. They feel totally wrung out at the end, and it is satisfying, as if they have just been beaten up and set straight—or the other guy who really needed it has. But do hell-fire-and-brimstone sermons really need to be preached very often?

Indeed, people love to hear the song, but they do not want to dance the dance.

It all comes back to these questions: Why are we in God's church? What are our fundamental reasons for being here? Are we seeking satisfaction for ourselves? Are we having an itch scratched? What are our motivations? Do we think the sermons at one particular place are better than at another particular place just because the speakers happen to be more polished?

Of course, the best motivations are that we are seeking the truth and seeking to please God.

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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