



CRANMER THEOLOGICAL HOUSE UPDATE

*A Reformed Episcopal
School of Ministry*

www.cranmerhouse.org

March 2009

From the Dean's Desk CTH Status Report

Two classes will be offered in The Woodlands during the Spring quarter:

Course: *The Historical Books*
Professor: The Rt. Rev. Ray Sutton

Dates: April 3-4, May 15-16, June TBD

Course: *English Bible Survey*
Professor: The Very Rev. Dr C.I. Crenshaw
Dates: April 17-18, May 1-2, May 22-23

The full schedule and book lists will be posted on the website at www.cranmerhouse.org/current.htm.

As always, your donations are received with thanksgiving. Please do not forget us, especially during the current economic crisis. We need your help.

Another Way to Donate

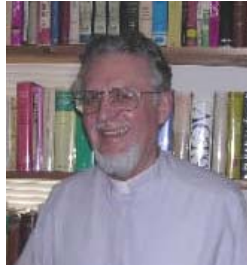
The next time you buy from Amazon.com, start at the DMA WOC website (www.dmawomen.org), and click on the Amazon Associate link in the left navigation bar. Anything you buy from the Amazon online store during the next 24 hours after you click will return a percentage to CTH.

Website News

The CTH "Ministry Footprint" page shows the far-reaching impact of our seminary. The page lists our faculty, students, and former students who are involved in various Anglican ministries around the world. If you have additions or corrections to the list, please contact us at cranmerhouse@gmail.com. The page address is <http://www.cranmerhouse.org/ministry.htm>.

Graduation Update

The Winter bulletin insert stated that graduation was tentatively set for Easter weekend. Due to schedule conflicts, other arrangements are now in the works. Details will be sent as soon as they are available.



Prayer Requests

Please consider scheduling one of our professors to visit your parish and present the needs of Cranmer House. Here are our current needs:

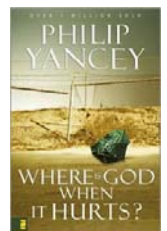
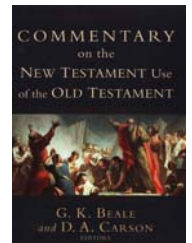
- A building in The Woodlands for the seminary
- New students. We have several new students in Houston, and several distance students who want the Th.M. degree, a one-year program.
- God's protecting hand on our students and their families, our faculty and their families, and all who support us with prayers and donations
- Continued financial support, especially in light of the national economic downturn
- Financial help for our students by sending in a donation just for them. We have a couple who need help.

Book Reviews

G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, editors
Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament, Baker Academic, hardback and over 1200 pages, double column. This is a research book, and the contributors read like a Who's Who of conservative scholarship. This volume takes every New Testament reference to the Old Testament in New Testament canonical order and studies the usage of the Old Testament quote, allusion, type, or analogy. It deals with the New Testament context, the Old Testament context, textual issues, Septuagint usage, usage in Judaism, theology, and other matters. For the serious interpreter, this will be a necessary reference.

For lay people, I highly recommend Philip Yancey's *Where Is God When It Hurts*. This is a very practical work that you'll find yourself returning to many times. Yancey is very realistic, engaging, biblical, and encouraging. Pastors should be aware of this to recommend to their people.

The Very Rev. Dr Curtis I. Crenshaw, Th.D. Ω



Deaconess Studies Program

Cranmer Theological House has added a Deaconess Studies concentration for the Master of Arts in Religion degree. Although the program is designed for women who have been accepted as Deaconess candidates, it is also suitable for any woman who is in discernment for the office or who desires in-depth training in theology. Requirements include core courses in Old and New Testament, theology, and Anglican doctrine, as well as the Biblical view of womanhood and the history of women's ministry. Several of the required courses are available on DVD or CD for distance learning.

The details for the Deaconess Studies program will be available in the catalog for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Please note that the Deaconess candidacy process is separate from the seminary application process.

For more information about the Reformed Episcopal Deaconess Order, including candidacy requirements, visit www.recdss.org.



Are You a Faithful Watchman?

Text: Ezekiel 3:16-27

(Ember Wednesday after the First Sunday in Lent)

© 2009, Mr. Lawrence Jones

Many of you have probably seen or heard of the motivational posters that are often displayed in offices. Most all of them have some pretty photograph taking up most of the poster and then below the photo in large colored print on a black background is a word that exemplifies some attribute or quality that the purchaser of the poster wants to emphasize, like teamwork, character, vision, etc. Under that is some statement, quote, or often humanistic platitude that is designed to engender the appropriate response in the reader. For instance, under the large word *vision* you might find, "If you can conceive it, you can achieve it." It is interesting that if you search on the internet for motivational posters what you will find up near the top of the list a site which specializes in "demotivators." One of their posters depicts a coastal scene with a gorgeous sky, a peaceful sea – but out of that sea juts the bow of a ship which has either sunk and is stuck or else is in the final throes of its journey to the deep. Underneath the picture is the title "Mistakes" with the tagline "It could be that the purpose of your life is only to serve as a warning to others."

Some days Ezekiel's life probably felt a bit like that. He would be right. Not that his life was a shipwreck, or a mistake, or that his life would serve as a warning to others because of its disastrous nature, but rather, he was called to be a watchman, a warning to his people of eminent danger they faced for their faithlessness. It was he who spotted the enemy coming and put out the call to prepare. Consider his first day on the job of being a prophet...

The book of Ezekiel begins with God pulling Ezekiel up into a grand vision of the wheels and calling him to the prophetic office to Israel. In chapter two verse 5 we read God speaking to Ezekiel of Israel:

Ezekiel 2:5-7 ⁵ "As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse -- for they *are* a rebellious house -- yet they will know that a prophet has been among them. ⁶ "And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns *are* with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they *are* a rebellious house. ⁷ "You shall speak My

words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they *are* rebellious.

And then, as if all that talk of briars, thorns, and living with the scorpions was not enough, just before our reading tonight in verse 7 of chapter 3, God forewarns Ezekiel once more regarding what his career as a prophet is going to look like saying:

NKJ Ezekiel 3:7-9 "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. ⁸ Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads. 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."

So right off the bat, Ezekiel is absolutely unable to be under any illusion that he whatever does will make any collective difference. So much so in fact, that he states in verse 14 that after the Spirit had taken Him away, he sat there astonished, overwhelmed in some translations, for seven days. How would you like that for a first day on the job?

In our reading we come to Ezekiel seven days later, the shock has worn off a bit and God is looking to reemphasize the duty of his ministers. You see, the prophetic office was not always about foretelling the future. More often the role of the prophet was to convict the people of their sin, a covenant prosecutor as it were. It was a ministry of restoration and reconciliation whereby the prophet by stating God's case sought to convict the people in their sin and faithlessness and bring them back to the Lord. Since each of us is called of God to spread his Word, to work out our dominion mandate, in a real way the prophetic office is filled when God's people set His Word before the world. Ezekiel was given Word from God in visions and such, but I would remind you that we also have the Word of God. With our Bibles we are able to set before men the counsel of God.

Today is Ember Wednesday. Ember days were traditionally, since the 5th century, days of prayer and fasting, especially for those about to be placed into ordained ministry, with their ordination to be held on Ember Saturday. The imagery of the watchmen fits well with this season, but it is also Lent in which we all are already engaged in a season of repentance. These verses find special application to the ordinand, but we need to be careful in making special application that we do not fail to grasp the universal ones.



God presented four possible cases to Ezekiel that illustrate the blessing of obedience and curse of disobedience for Ezekiel. Two of the cases involved those termed wicked, two involved those referred to as righteous. Two of the cases involved Ezekiel warning the person, yet three involved the death of the particular person. Let's look at these illustrations.

In the first case we read:

Ezekiel 3:18 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."

Here we have wicked man number one. He is wicked, but unwarned because Ezekiel has not presented the Word of God to him. Since he is unwarned, how would this wicked man know what to do? As the Apostle Paul says in Romans:

Romans 10:14-15 ¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent?

Ezekiel was sent, but he must preach in order to be heard. He must dispense God's Word to those who are wicked, those who are treading the wicked way. Wicked man number one dies in his wickedness, but because Ezekiel has been unfaithful to God and failed to warn this man, he is dead in his trespasses and sins, and God lets his prophet know that he will be held to account for this.

In the second case we read:

Ezekiel 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."

Here Ezekiel has preached to the wicked, as God has instructed him to go do to Israel. As God has predicted Israel would not listen, so this wicked man spurned the warnings and ignored the Word of God. This man dies in his sins, but God lets Ezekiel know that although the Word was spurned, Ezekiel's obedience will not be forgotten.

God then lays before Ezekiel two more cases, those of the so-called righteous men. In the first case we read:

Ezekiel 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."

It is important to God that His Word be kept ever before those who are, or even who appear righteous. Remember those who in Matthew 7:22 said, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" to whom Jesus Christ responded, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" This man in Ezekiel by all appearances is righteous. If anyone ever doubts that our righteousness is as filthy rags they only

need to study this verse. Here is a man who seems righteous and yet has turned from the right way to commit iniquity – iniquity such that God brings about his death. When he dies, his dead faith cannot sustain him and his righteous deeds are remembered no more. Because Ezekiel has not kept the Word before this man, God reckons his blood to Ezekiel.

The final case God presents to Ezekiel is that of another so-called righteous man:

Ezekiel 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."

In this final case we have the guy who sits in the pew right next to the previous guy. He appears to be righteous, and when the Word is presented to Him he listens, takes heed, and lives. He does not turn to iniquity, and Ezekiel's faithfulness is remembered by God.

But wait, didn't we forget someone? What of the wicked man who repents? What of the righteous man who stumbles and repents? To that I say that they are the same as the last.

The wicked man, or let us say formerly wicked man, who repents and turns to the Lord is forgiven. As God promises in Jeremiah and Hebrews, He remembers this man's sin no more. He is a new creature, the wicked man he was is dead and a righteous man is born. He is as the last – he will live. And the watchman's faithfulness will be remembered.

What of the righteous stumbler? You mean the one like Moses, King David, and the Apostle Peter? God says in 1 John 1:9 that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This man is cleansed – he lives, and the faithful watchman is not forgotten.

We have set before us as watchmen our Bishops and our priests. They are the preachers who set the Word before us. We also have other watchmen, our brothers in Christ who care about us, love us, and are loathe to see us stumble. These may even take the form of our friends or even, shocking as it may be to the youth of our day, our parents, whom I can testify even at 45 years of age are faithful watchmen for me – and for that I am thankful. Collectively we should join with others in being watchmen to our Church, and watchmen to our culture. In that, our Bishops and priests will be taking the point. As in the early Church, and as in the time of the prophets, the attack will come most directly to those riding point, our clergy. Pray for them.

In looking at this reading in Ezekiel we need to ask ourselves a couple of rather direct and uncomfortable questions. Because they are uncomfortable, I am going to do you a favor and instead of just telling you to ask yourself, I'm going to ask you instead. I ask that you hold whatever answers you have in your heart and ponder deeply them in this season of Lent.

Which of the people that we have discussed are you?

Are you the wicked in need of repentance? Come to the Lord, repent and turn. Live. There are two deaths. The first is but a passing on, the second is a life lost forever. The first comes to all men, the second can be avoided. Christ calls you through His Word, come to Him.

Are you the one that appears righteous? Do you do the right things, but know something is wrong? The watchman calls, "Repent!" Give yourself over heart and soul to the one who saves and live. He forgives all who come to Him with contrite hearts.

Are you the righteous? You turn from sin when you see it. Like David, while in this mortal coil, you are occasionally a bit stubborn or slow to repent, but when you see it, you lay those specific sins at the altar of forgiveness. You regularly come and confess

for God to forgive even those things you do not see because you are aware that we are but sinners and all fall short. You know that we are so much the sinner that we often are painfully unaware of exactly what sins we have committed. If so, you do well, for you have listened and heeded the watchmen sent to proclaim the Lord to you, but for you there awaits another question.

Are you a faithful watchman?

This is a question that each and every Christian must wrestle with no less than Ezekiel. We are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. We watch over our own souls, do we pay any regard to theirs? I am not saying that we are to be busybodies or to become self-appointed inquisitors, but that we are in righteous love to be concerned with the spiritual state of those around us. God has brought the people in your life near to you. What are you doing with that?



As parents we are specifically called to perform the duty of watchmen to our children. We are to train a child in the way he should go, to teach him when rising up and lying down. We are to be their watchmen giving warning of the dangers coming toward them. Do you? Do you speak God's Word against the sins of our culture? Do you discuss these things with those

brought near to you? Are you a faithful watchman? And if you sense you are not, what are you going to do about it?

Make no mistake, those who are ordained into ministry have the greater burden here. This is plain throughout Scripture. But although the greater burden is there, not all of the burden is. I do not know your spiritual state, but I ask that you ponder these two particular questions that call out to us this Lenten season and how they pertain to your particular spiritual situation and walk with God.

Which of the people that we have discussed are you? Are you a faithful watchman? Amen Ω