

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SIN

BIBLE TEXT : Ezekiel 18:1-32.

LESSON 408 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezekiel 18:20).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Ezekiel 18:1-32

1 The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying,
2 What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?
3 *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have *occasion* any more to use this proverb in Israel.
4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.
5 But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right,
6 *And* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman,
7 *And* hath not oppressed any, *but* hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;
8 He *that* hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, *that* hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,
9 Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he *is* just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.
10 If he beget a son *that is* a robber, a shedder of blood, and

Bible References:

I God's Just Dealings with Man

1. The Lord reproves the parable of sour grapes, Ezekiel 18:1-3;
Romans 6:23
23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
2. The Lord shows how He deals with a just father, Ezekiel 18:4-9;
Psalms 15:5
5 *He that* putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved.
Amos 5:4
4 For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live:
3. He shows how He deals with a wicked son of a just father, Ezekiel 18:10-13;
Leviticus 20:9
9 For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood *shall be* upon him.
Deuteronomy 21:18-21
18 If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and *that*, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them:
19 Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place;
20 And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son *is* stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; *he is* a glutton, and a drunkard.
21 And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.
4. He shows how He deals with a just son of a wicked father, Ezekiel 18:14-19.
5. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," Ezekiel 18:20;
Isaiah 3:11
11 Woe unto the wicked! *it shall be* ill *with him*: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.
Romans 2:9
9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;
6. When the wicked turns from his sins and doeth righteousness, he shall live, Ezekiel 18:21, 23-28;
Ezekiel 33:12
12 Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his *righteousness* in the day that he sinneth.
Ezekiel 33:16
16 None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.
Ezekiel 33:19

that doeth the like to *any* one of these *things*,

11 And that doeth not any of those *duties*, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbour's wife,

12 Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination,

13 Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.

14 Now, lo, *if* he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like,

15 *That* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife,

16 Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, *but* hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment,

17 *That* hath taken off his hand from the poor, *that* hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.

18 *As for* his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did *that* which *is* not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity.

19 Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, *and* hath kept all my statutes, and hath

19 But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.

7. When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die, Ezekiel 18:24, 26;

Ezekiel 33:11

11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

2 Peter 2:20

20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

8. Israel claimed the way of the Lord was unequal, Ezekiel 18:25, 29.

9. Exhortation is given to turn from their sins and live, Ezekiel 18:30-32;

Ezekiel 33:11

11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Jeremiah 35:15

15 I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

Ephesians 4:22-24

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Notes:

Sour Grapes

The Children of Israel who were captive in the land of Babylon were using this proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." They were placing their blame for being in captivity on the sins of their parents. They were not looking into their own hearts and saying, "We have sinned, and because of our own sins the Lord has let us be brought into captivity."

It seems to be a mark of corrupt human nature to lay the blame for sin on someone else. Just as Adam placed his sin of disobedience on Eve, and Even on the serpent, so man has always been prone to blame someone else if he is in a sinful condition. The Lord's law of judgement has always been just and the same. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

Abraham realised God was just, and when the Lord was about to destroy Sodom, he pleaded with the Lord to spare Lot, saying, "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: . . . Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).

The Lord was tired of their unjustly using this proverb of the sour grapes, so through Ezekiel he tells them their ways are unequal. He says, "All souls are mine," the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son. None shall die for another's crime, none shall be saved for another's righteousness.

God's Standard

"But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, . .

done them, he shall surely live.

20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

21 But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

22 All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.

23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: *and* not that he should return from his ways, and live?

24 But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, *and* doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

25 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?

26 When a righteous *man* turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.

27 Again, when the wicked *man* turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

28 Because he considereth, and

. hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; . . . hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgements, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD." That is God's standard for a just father.

The Lord then takes up the case of an unjust son of a just father. If a son does not live righteously but is a robber, a shedder of blood, hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath not restored the pledge, then in his iniquity he shall die: making it plain he shall die for his own sins.

Then the Lord treats the case of a just son of an unjust father. If he sees all his father's sins and considereth and does all that is lawful and right, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall live. The Lord is making it plain to them they need not suffer for their father's sins.

Now the Lord takes up the case of a sinner. If he will turn from his sins and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live. The penitent sinner is dealt with according to his new obedience and not according to his former sins. On the other hand, if a righteous man turns from his righteousness back to sin, he shall be punished for his sins and his former righteousness will be of no avail to him. He must expect, in justice, that his former goodness will not atone for subsequent sins.

Eternal Security

There is a false teaching in the world today that when once one has been born again he is always a child of God and will not be lost eternally regardless of how deep he may go into sin, and though he die in his sins. They call it "eternal security." Some say that people who have once been truly saved and have backslidden will eventually come back to God before they die, though they may wander in sin for a long time. It is true that they may get back to God, but there is danger that they will not. How they can ignore the plain teaching in this lesson is more than one can understand. In John 15:1-6, Christ teaches that the unfruitful branches are cut off and destroyed. Every one of these branches had been attached to the vine at one time.

David's warning to Solomon, his son, in I Chronicles 28:9, says: "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; **but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.**"

These portions of Scripture plainly teach that a soul may have once known God and then backslide and be lost forever. No sin will ever enter Heaven. Jesus died that we might be saved from our sins.

The Truth of the Scriptures

A favourite text of those who believe in the so-called eternal security doctrine is John 10:27, 28, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Notice Jesus said, "They follow me." Certainly when a soul backslides and sins, he is not following Jesus and is no longer a sheep.

Our late Brother Jack Robbins used to say, "No man can pluck you out of God's hand, but you can wiggle yourself out." "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). When a soul yields to temptation and falls into sin, he removes himself from God's hand, just as Adam did when he yielded to the

turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

29 Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

31 Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye.

voice of the tempter in the Garden of Eden. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." (Matthew 24:13). It is the condition that we are in spiritually at the **end** of the race that will determine whether we have eternal life or will suffer eternal damnation.

"When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and **dieth in them**; for his iniquity that he hath done **shall he die**." There is nothing in this verse to make us think that because he was once God's child the Lord will bring him back into the fold before he dies. As the tree falls, so shall it be.

The Lord declares His ways are equal and Israel's ways are unequal. So are the ways of the eternal security advocates — they are unequal.

The Lord says He is married to the backslider, and He longs to bring him back into the fold, and will bring him back if he will repent and turn away from his sins. If one dies in his sins -- which many do — he is lost, eternally lost. The Lord pleads with man to repent and turn from his transgressions so that iniquity will not be his ruin. He says, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Eternal Life

"As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth"(Ezekiel 33:11, 12). What the Lord is looking for today is real born-again Christians — those who have passed from death unto life, those who have forsaken the world, with its sin and folly, and have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb. They have a new life. Their life has been changed. They are no more children of the devil. They have changed masters and they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. They are the ones who will inherit eternal life if they continue steadfast unto the end.

Many in Israel fell by the wayside and perished while making the journey from Egypt to Canaan, but God wills that all men everywhere come to repentance and live. "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

QUESTIONS

1. What proverb were the Children of Israel using?
2. Name the different things the Lord says a just man will do.
3. In the day that a righteous man sins, what happens to him?
4. In the day that a sinner turns from his sins, what happens to him?
5. What false doctrine does this chapter in Ezekiel refute?
6. Explain how God's ways are equal.
7. How do we get a new heart?
8. Why does the Lord plead with the sinner to repent?