

Pentwater Bible Church

Book of Ezekiel

Message 33

April 24, 2016



The Return of the Prodigal Son by Pompeo Batoni cir. 1773

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Ezekiel
Message Thirty-Three
Personal Responsibility To God
April 24, 2016
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WE ARE ALL INDIVIDUALLY RESPONSIBLE TO GOD

Ezekiel 18:1-13

The word of Jehovah came unto me again, saying, ²What 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? ³As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. ⁴Behold, 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.

⁵But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, ⁶and hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbor's wife, neither hath come near to a woman in her impurity, ⁷and hath not wronged any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath taken nought by robbery, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; ⁸he that hath not given forth upon interest, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true justice between man and man, ⁹hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept mine ordinances, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord Jehovah.

¹⁰If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth any one of these things, ¹¹and that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbor's wife, ¹²hath wronged the poor and needy, hath taken by robbery, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination, ¹³hath given forth upon interest, 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 (ASV, 1901).

WHY ARE YOU USING THIS PROVERB?

Ezekiel 18:1-3

The word of Jehovah came unto me again, saying, ²What 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 (ASV, 1901)?

God comes to Ezekiel and asks him a very strong question about a proverb that was popular in Israel at that time. The popular proverb is just as the Lord quoted it, “The

fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." It must have been quite well known because Jeremiah referred to it too as a lead in statement for the introduction to the New Covenant.

Jeremiah 31:29-31

²⁹In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. ³⁰But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. ³¹Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah (ASV, 1901).

This proverb is cited by God right after he gave them parables that foretold their destruction. There were two. One was about the abandoned infant that He rescued and the other was the two eagles. Both parables described their national sins and punishment for them. The whole reason for those national parables was to startle the nation Israel into repentance so they could avoid a disaster. Now He reminds them about a popular parable that seemed to cover their responsibility for their individual behavior. The people in sin justified their complacency by citing this popular proverb. This issues is further complicated by the Law's own text that seemed to affirm it.

Exodus 20:4-6

⁴Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⁵thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me, ⁶and showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments (ASV, 1901).

Numbers 14:18

Jehovah is slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation (ASV, 1901).

This too seemed to affirm the concept that because the earlier generations had sinned the present generation would suffer for what they had done. For example some of the most wicked kings such as Ahab, Manasseh, or Jeroboam were thought to have caused the Jews to go into exile. If that was so their thinking came to the conclusion of not even trying to follow godly behavior. They thought what was the use if we will suffer no matter what we do because of the evil earlier generation? The also thought that their sins should not be counted against them because they were forced into sinning which was not their fault. This attitude was patently false but like many heretical it had a bit of truth embedded in it to make is plausible. Children will see their parents sin and might follow that path too into sinful behavior. God is going to clarify this concept in this chapter for Ezekiel to understand and convey to the exiles. "*Our fathers have sinned and are not; and we have borne their iniquities*" (Lamentations 5:7). This was a false and unjust accusation. No

doubt they rested their proverb on the Law's verses. But doing this they denied their own guilt and refused to repent and be converted. And now the Lord answers the proverb to show that it is unjust and must be removed from Israel.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD

Ezekiel 18:3-4

³As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. ⁴Behold, 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 (ASV, 1901).

He simply says, “*ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.*” In other words He says that you will not have any need to use this proverb blaming others and earlier generation for your own sinful behavior. God is going to correct their thinking wherein they are blaming other for their own sins. Each soul is precious to God and belong to Him. Both father and son are independent and belong to Him. However He now make the distinction. He says that regardless of the history of experience, “*the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*” So each of us is responsible to God for our own behavior. It is true that sinful parents, leaders and ancestors will influence us. It is never the less the responsibility of the individual to be accountable to God and the standards for morality He has set before us. He will judge the individual, father or son, according to their personal conduct. He is the Creator of all and He will deal with each on an individual basis. If the sins of the fathers come upon the children, it is because the children followed the wickedness of the fathers. “*Every man shall be put to death for his own sin*” (Deuteronomy 24:16). The person that sins shall die for his own sins. “*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*” This attitude has contemporary relevance. People blame other for their sinful behavior instead of taking personal responsibility for their actions.

JUSTICE UNDER THE LAW

Ezekiel 18:5-9

⁵But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, ⁶and hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbor's wife, neither hath come near to a woman in her impurity, ⁷and hath not wronged any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath taken nought by robbery, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; ⁸he that hath not given forth upon interest, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true justice between man and man, ⁹hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept mine ordinances, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord Jehovah (ASV, 1901).

God is now going to provide three examples of particular cases all hypothetical which provide practical explanation to His teaching of personal responsibility. The first one is the righteous man who followed God's Law with all his heart. There is a logic in the order that God presents these examples. It begins with a refusal to serve or acknowledge idols because idolatry is the most serious sin and is a denial of God and His Law. The text that says, “*and hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel.*” Makes specific reference

to the High Places which the idols were worshipped. Not only does the just man not worship them he will not even look toward them. Interestingly the Torah forbids the turning to idols (Leviticus 19:4). This would included the study of the practices of idolatry. By engaging the mind in these thoughts it produces a temptation to fall into them. It is found in the second commandment given in the Mosaic cited above in Exodus 20:4-6. The New Testament cites these dynamics as a warning too (I Corinthians 15:33; Ephesians 5:3). Many people have thought they could control their thoughts when they engaged the occult and evil practices only to find they became ensnared by them. Few genuine believers willingly go into perdition as a course or willful path. Consider how godly Solomon was but the women he married led him away from God. He violated God's Law in one area and it caused him to fall away from God in several others.

Following this the discourse goes on to cite common human lusts and passions. The examples given relate to bridling sexual attraction. It mentions positive commandments including acts of kindness and charity between people. God's Law ordained that a borrower could be taken to court for non-payment of his debts. However if he has nothing except his clothes on his body and his personal tools which enable him to earn a living the creditor must give them back to the debtor for the amount of time which is necessary for him to earn his living.

Then Jehovah discusses the maintenance of justice and law which is the basis for a safe and peaceable civil society. Lastly the Lord gives a general decree to obey the laws. God is going to conclude this chapter by saying that that people are only punished for their own sins involving morality. There is no mention of the general sin that came into the world at the Fall in the Garden of Eden. That is generally experienced by all and must be overcome.

If a man be just or righteous he will *shall surely live, saith the Lord Jehovah*. In the Hebrew text it gives two forms of the verb *to live* indicating that the righteousness of a God fearing and obeying person will receive life in this world and life in the next world after passing. Failing to achieve that for the person that disobeys God results in death in both spheres of life. On earth and in Heaven.

EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Ezekiel 18:10-13

¹⁰If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth any one of these things, ¹¹and that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbor's wife, ¹²hath wronged the poor and needy, hath taken by robbery, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination, ¹³hath given forth upon interest, 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 (ASV, 1901).

God now tells Ezekiel in the form of an example that characterizes the essence of the teaching that each person is responsible to God for his or her own conduct toward Him. All sin is against God. Human collateral is usually involved but it is all a direct affront to God. So God says what if the righteous (*Tsaddik*) man has a son "*that is a robber, a*

shedder of blood, and that doeth any one of these things?" The prime example is that of the righteous and kind king Hezekiah who had a despotic son named Manasseh. This offspring of the *Tsaddik* man does the exact opposite of what his father did to follow God. This son is a robber, he sheds blood and is thoroughly immersed in the worship of idols. Further he has had sexual relations with his neighbors wife and harmed the poor. His lending practices were wicked and in violation of the Law. The term abominations are a reference to wickedly inappropriate sexual relations such as homosexuality, incest, and bestiality.

What then, should this man live? Now the context is on earth and spiritually in Heaven too after passing. This is a rhetorical question but never the less God provides the answer. He says, *"he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him?"*

God is saying that there is no reason to prolong this persons life here and he will face spiritual death as well. Consider king Amon who was the son of Manasseh. He perished after only two years on the throne in a coup d'état in the palace.

II Kings 21:19-24

¹⁹ Amon was twenty and two years old when he began to reign; and he reigned two years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. ²⁰ And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, as did Manasseh his father. ²¹ And he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them: ²² and he forsook Jehovah, the God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of Jehovah. ²³ And the servants of Amon conspired against him, and put the king to death in his own house. ²⁴ But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead (ASV, 1901).

Clearly Amon died quickly as a result of his gross sins against God. He father had a slightly different story. Manasseh is said to have repented of his sins after being taken to Assyria.

II Chronicles 33:9-16

⁹ And Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did evil more than did the nations whom Jehovah destroyed before the children of Israel. ¹⁰ And Jehovah spake to Manasseh, and to his people; but they gave no heed. ¹¹ Wherefore Jehovah brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh in chains, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. ¹² And when he was in distress, he besought Jehovah his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. ¹³ And he prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that Jehovah he was God. ¹⁴ Now after this he built an outer wall to the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entrance at the fish gate; and he compassed Ophel about with it, and raised it up to a very great height: and he put valiant captains in all the fortified cities

of Judah. ¹⁵ And he took away the foreign gods, and the idol out of the house of Jehovah, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of Jehovah, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. ¹⁶ And he built up the altar of Jehovah, and offered thereon sacrifices of peace-offerings and of thanksgiving, and commanded Judah to serve Jehovah, the God of Israel. ¹⁷ Nevertheless the people sacrificed still in the high places, but only unto Jehovah their God (ASV, 1901).

The Assyrians bound Manasseh then put a hook in his nose as though he were a animal in need of taming. They transported him to Babylon which at that time was a southern providence of Assyria. Later Manasseh repented before the LORD and was allowed to return to Israel. This is an example that even the most wicked of people who harmed many could be redeemed and restored by the Lord. He rebuild the outer wall on the east side of Jerusalem and regarrisoned the fortress cities throughout Judah and removed all the pagan idols he was responsible for implementing. Finally he restored proper worship procedures. The end of this story is that he could not influence the people to completely respond positively to God after he had led them away for so many years. They did worship God but continued it in the idolatrous High Places which provided strong temptation to engage in idolatry. So even after a change of heart Manasseh had done much damage that was affecting the next generation and the general population too.

NEXT MESSAGE: PERSONAL SIN IS CORRECT PERSONALLY CONT.

E-mail: info@pentwaterbiblechurch.com **Call: Toll Free 877-706-2479**