

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SIN

BIBLE TEXT : Ezekiel 18:1-32.

LESSON 408 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "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" (Ezekiel 18:4).

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8 *He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,*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 that doeth the like to any one of*

Bible References:

Notes:

Messages from God's Word

The Book of Ezekiel is sometimes considered a book of mystery and there are some things we do not understand, but there are many things in this Book that are easily understood. We learned in the previous lesson of the message the Lord gave Ezekiel for the people. Forty-six times in this Book it is recorded, "The word of the LORD came unto me, saying". We read in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

A Proverb

Today's lesson begins with: "The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, 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?" A proverb is similar to a parable, sometimes described as a short story from which a moral or spiritual truth is drawn; or a saying with a hidden meaning. Jesus often spoke in parables; and we have a whole Book in the Bible called, The Proverbs.

This proverb is explained in Jeremiah 31:29, 30: "In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." Evidently the Lord was displeased with children blaming their father for their own sin and excusing themselves.

Three Examples

In this chapter a word picture is drawn of three men. The first one is good and does the things that are lawful and right: he does not worship idols, he feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, keeps the commandments of the Lord. God says of this man. "He is just, he shall surely live." We would call him a Christian.

Now another picture: this one is the son of the one just described. What kind of picture does he present? He is a robber, a murderer, a worshiper of idols; he receives wrongful gains on his money. God says of him: "He shall not live: . . . he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him." The Lord is speaking of spiritual death, or being separated from God. Perhaps his father had tried to teach his son to be good, but he did not obey. When he dies, his soul is lost because of his own sins. He cannot say, "I am not responsible; my father is to blame for my sins." Oh, no! He is guilty before God!

The third picture is of the son of this wicked father. He considers the sin of his father, but instead of following in his steps, he follows in the ways of his grandfather -- the first man described. He does not worship idols, he feeds the hungry, provides clothes for the naked. He walks in the way of the Lord, he does not take advantage of another in order to enrich himself. We would say of such a person, "He is a Christian; he has been born again." God says: "He shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live." So we learn from these three

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 done them, he shall surely live.

examples that each man is held responsible for his own soul. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

The Prophet Jeremiah spoke of people who said: "our fathers have sinned, and are not (or are dead); and we have borne their iniquities" (Lamentations 5:7). But the Lord said: "All souls are mine; . . . the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Regardless of what their parents had done, it was up to them individually to seek the Lord and do right.

A little girl once dreamed that she ran to catch hold of the skirt of her Christian mother as the Lord came. She thought surely then she could go to Heaven with her mother. But the Lord pushed her aside and took her mother away, which taught the girl that she must get ready to meet the Lord for herself.

This chapter is easily understood: "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."

The Fall of Man

Ever since the creation of man in the Garden of Eden, Satan has caused people to blame others for their mistakes and their sin. We know the story of Adam who blamed Eve for giving him the forbidden fruit; Eve blamed the serpent. When Adam and Eve committed sin, they felt condemnation; and even though they tried to excuse themselves, they were guilty and were punished by God. Through their transgression, sin, trouble and sickness came into the world, and since then every child is born with the nature of sin, which we call the Adamic nature. God overlooks the little gestures of anger, stubbornness and disobedience of an infant; however, when a child reaches the age where he is condemned for doing wrong, he must pray to Jesus and receive forgiveness for his sin if he wants to please God. Then he may receive sanctification, which takes out the root of sin, or the sin nature with which he was born. There is no excuse: Jesus suffered and died on the Cross and rose from the grave that we could be saved and sanctified and live an upright life.

Today it is still the tendency of people to blame others for their failures. Perhaps a mother in the home or a teacher in the school will try to find out who broke a window. Often boys and girls will do what we call "pass the buck" — in other words, the guilty person will not admit his guilt but tries to lay the blame on another.

We know that little children follow the example set by their parents. Often before a child can speak plainly, he will imitate those about him. If a father smokes, his little boy will often say, "When I get big, I am going to smoke." When parents speak harshly to a child, that child usually replies in the same manner. How important it is to set a good example.

God is faithful to everyone, and even though children are not taught about Jesus in the home, even though they do not attend Sunday School, yet God speaks to them. When they reach the age of accountability God deals with their soul. If they close their heart to the voice of God their heart becomes harder, and as they grow older they commit greater sins. But we learn from this lesson that they have no one to blame but themselves for their sins. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" (I John 3:20). God is faithful and "lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). When God speaks, that is the time to turn from sin and seek Him.

The Backslider

Verse 24 of chapter 18 is similar to verse 20 of chapter 3,

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 turneth away from all his

which we studied in the previous lesson. From it we learn that when a righteous person commits sin, he is once more a sinner and all his righteousness shall not be remembered. The Lord offers hope to that person whom we call a backslider. If he turns from his wickedness, "he shall save his soul alive." The Israelites said that the ways of the Lord were not equal. But God's ways are fair and just: He has always punished the guilty and He always will. "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."

Oh, the pleading voice of God! How He calls, pleads, and yearns for the sinner to return to Him. "For why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn your-selves, and live ye." God invites all and rejects none who seek Him.

The Application

Those who have read the text and the above notes shall surely be held accountable for this knowledge. They cannot say, "If I miss Heaven, I will blame another." Your minister, your Sunday School teacher and the writer of this lesson have warned you. God's Word has spoken: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The responsibility rests upon you.

QUESTIONS

1. What kind of person was the first man described in this chapter? The second man? The third?
2. Why are these example given?
3. Do you think the son must bear the iniquity of the father? Must the father bear the iniquity of the son?
4. What happens when a wicked person turns from all his sins and seeks the Lord? Are all his transgressions forgotten?
5. When a righteous person turns away from God, what is his condition then? Is his previous righteousness still remembered by God?
6. Whose ways are unequal, the ways of the Lord or the ways of man?
7. Give an example of God's punishment upon guilty persons.
8. What is a proverb? A parable?
9. What do we call one who has turned away from God? May he return to the Lord?
10. If a child is not taught right from wrong by his parents, how can he know when he commits sin?

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.