

Ezekiel 18:1-4, (5-24), 25-32 ESV

Sour Grapes

Services: Sunday, 10/1 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, 10/2 at 7 PM

Church Year: 17th Sun. after Pentecost / 16th Sun. after Trinity – 2017

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: In this OT reading, the LORD is speaking *through* Ezekiel to people who are
 ♦complaining, ♦living in sin, and, *for some*, ♦rejecting the LORD.

1. **The “Why” of Suffering:** ¹The word of the LORD came to me [to Ezekiel – the prophet of the LORD, so Ezekiel spoke the Word of the LORD]: ²“What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? ³ As I live, declares the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴ Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.”
 - a. The proverb: When the people quoted that proverb, *they were accusing the LORD of being unfair* – they were saying that **their fathers** sinned, yet **they** were being punished. Then the LORD made it clear that “**the soul who sins shall die.**” “True repentance puts aside all excuses and humbly says with the publican, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner’” (Kretzmann, OT II:539).
 - b. Sin and suffering: When we get the idea “**that adversity is the fruit of sin and prosperity the result**”

of righteousness,”¹ we must remember the account of Job – righteous, **yet** *he had much adversity!*

2. Summary Statements on Verses 5-24:

- a. Vv. 5-9 – Father: **“If a man is righteous [by faith] and [from that faith] does what is just and right... he shall surely live...”**
- b. Vv. 10-13 – Son: **“If he [the righteous man] fathers a son who [is unrighteous, thus faithless, and does not do what is just and right]... he shall surely die...”**
- c. Vv. 14-17 – Grandson: **“Now suppose this man [the unrighteous son] fathers a son who sees all the sins that his father has done [but he, by faith, is righteous]... and does not do likewise [as his father did]... he shall surely live.”**
- d. Vv. 18-20 – Each person is responsible: **“The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son.”** So how does that passage reconcile with this one? “...I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me... (Exodus 20:5 NIV). Since unbelieving parents *oftentimes* have unbelieving children, *so the sin of a father can directly influence his son* but, **thankfully**, not in all cases.
- e. Vv. 21-22 – Forgiveness for the wicked: **“But if a wicked [faithless] person [is made righteous through**

¹ The New Bible Commentary: Revised (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 674.

faith, **thus, by grace**, ‘returns to the true God whom he had abandoned’ (TLSB, 1338) and] **turns away from all his sins that he has committed... he shall surely live...**” In other words, “His new relation with God leads to a change in behavior” (Ibid.).

- f. Vv. 23-24 – Judgment for those who turn away:
“But when a righteous person turns away from his righteousness [from Christ] and does injustice... he shall die.” “A person will be judged by his status before God at the moment of judgment” (Ibid.).

3. **Justice and Mercy:**

- a. Justice: ²⁵ **“Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? ²⁶ When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die.”** // If we turn away from God’s mercy in Christ – as some are doing, then He must punish us; He is just.
- b. Mercy: ²⁷ **“Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. ²⁸ Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.”** // His turning is – **by God’s grace and power** – from sin and unbelief to God’s gift of forgiveness through Jesus!

4. **Since Judgment Is Coming, Repent:**

- a. Judgment: ²⁹ **“Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, are**

my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? ³⁰ Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD.” // The LORD “will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished” (Ex. 34:7 NAS).

- b. Repent: “**Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin.** ³¹ **Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?** ³² **For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live.**” // God created us to be His very own! He wants everyone to repent and live; therefore, HE DOES THAT WORK of giving a new heart and a new spirit through Holy Baptism; then He ♦forgives us through the absolution, ♦nourishes us through the Word, and ♦assures us through the Supper! Even though we all deserve the worst, **IN Christ we have THE BEST!**

Conclusion: Let us pray: Father in heaven, we acknowledge and give You much thanks for ♦showing us our sins, ♦making us sorry, and ♦giving Your Son as our all-sufficient sacrifice! In His name, we pray!

Follow Up Questions:

1. Are children punished for the sins of their parents?
2. Is adversity always the result of personal sin?
3. Is the LORD both just and merciful?
4. Is full forgiveness available for everyone thru Jesus?

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