

Ezekiel 18: 1-4, 25-32

(Ezek 18:1-4) The word of the LORD came to me: {2} "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: "'The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'?" {3} "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. {4} For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son--both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.

(Ezek 18:25-32) "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Hear, O house of Israel: Is my way unjust? Is it not your ways that are unjust? {26} If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin, he will die for it; because of the sin he has committed he will die. {27} But if a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he will save his life. {28} Because he considers all the offenses he has committed and turns away from them, he will surely live; he will not die. {29} Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Are my ways unjust, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are unjust? {30} "Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. {31} Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? {32} For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!

Painting signed. Person responsible.

Spiking football. Person responsible.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Painting signed

Spike football

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

I. Blame Others

A. Fathers to blame

1. Meaning of proverb
2. Sins of fathers
3. Judgment on fathers
4. Exiles
5. "Our fathers' fault"

B. We blame society

1. Theft/ needed to
2. Sexual/ normal

C. We blame others

1. Parties at war
2. Driving

D. God's comments

1. Deals with individuals
2. Take responsibility/ improve

II. Blame God

A. Captives blamed God

B. People today blame God

1. Student kicked out
2. Car accident -sem student
3. Heart attack

C. Easier to blame God

1. Than to admit failures
2. Than to admit DWI
3. Than to take care of self

D. God is just

1. Punishes guilty
2. Let's penitent live
3. "No sin?? No need for discipline???"

E. God's attitude

1. LOVE AND MERCY
2. Because of Christ

IA1 "The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? What is the meaning of the proverb? Whose teeth are ordinarily set on edge when someone eats something sour? The person who eats the sour grapes. But the proverb says, "The children get all puckered up because the fathers ate the sour grapes." The people of Israel were quoting the proverb to complain that they were getting the negative consequences because of their ancestors' actions.

2 Their ancestors had eaten sour grapes. They had turned their backs on the Lord. They worshiped the gods of the Canaanite nations all around them. The kings of Israel had set up a whole system of worship that opposed the worship of the true God in Israel. Most of the people lived such an ungodly lifestyle that the Lord said He couldn't tell the difference between them and the other nations.

3 God had set their fathers teeth on edge. He let the nation be divided into two pitiful weak little kingdoms. He allowed the wealth to be shipped away to the capitals of the empires of the day. He let the land flowing with milk and honey be devastated and become a ruin.

4 But now remember Ezekiel was with the people in exile in Babylon. Most of them were pretty well off socially and financially. But it always bothered them that they were there against their will. It was a constant reminder to them that they as a nation were under the thumb of God's judgment. Their teeth were set on edge.

5 And it was their opinion that it was all their fathers' fault. Yes, our fathers sinned. Yes the Lord disciplined them. But, why should we have to put up with the present situation. Our fathers were the cause of all the problems. We don't deserve to be under God's judgment. It's not our fault.

B1 Sound familiar? We are being programmed to refuse to take responsibility for our own actions. The thief is not responsible for breaking God's law. He should have what he needs to live on. It is society's fault for not providing him with what he needs. If he has to steal to get what he needs, he's not responsible.

2 The person who is sexually active without being married is just rebelling against the limitations which society has placed on him. He is just responding to all the sexual stimulation that our society offers. He isn't responsible for all the stimulation all around him. He isn't responsible for just doing something that is natural to every living creature who has sexual needs.

C1 Did you ever talk to two parties who were at war with each other? Each side has a list a mile long of the things that the other party is responsible for. After all of these things have been pointed out, the comment is: "Now you see why I am acting in this way. If you had neighbors, friends or whatever like that, you would be acting that way too, wouldn't you." Just another way of saying, "I am not responsible."

2 Driving your vehicle is another good example. Who is always to blame for an accident? Who is always to blame for the near accident? Who is always the one who fails to show courtesy? We are so programmed to blame somebody else that we don't even consider looking into the mirror.

D1 What does the Lord think about the complaint that the messes in our lives are somebody else's fault? {3} "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. {4} For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son--both alike belong to me. God is saying, "I made you. You belong to me. I don't deal with people second hand. I don't deal with people on the basis of the way their fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, wives or husbands act. I deal with people one on one. I deal with people on the basis of how they act." "The soul who sins is the one who will die." "The one who sins gets punished for his own sins. Not somebody else's sins. Each person has a nontransferable relationship with God. Don't blame your problems on the sins of your fathers. You are responsible for the consequences of your own sins."

2 Things haven't changed. God hasn't changed. If I have been caught stealing, I am responsible. I must suffer the consequences. If I am sexually active with someone other than my marriage partner, I am responsible. I must suffer the consequences. If I don't bother with my neighbors, I am responsible for the war. I must suffer the consequences. If I was inattentive or didn't show courtesy, I am responsible for the accident. I must suffer the consequences. When I am sinning against God, I am responsible. I am liable for the consequences. God wants us to take responsibility for the messes which are actions have caused. Society is never improved when society is blamed for something. Society is not something abstract. Society is people. Society will only be improved when the individuals who make up society take responsibility for the problems in the society and do something about them. Relationships with others are only mended when we take responsibility for our own actions instead of blaming everything on others.

IIA These people were also blaming God for their problems. God was correct in letting our fathers be punished. But He is unjust in letting us be subjected to discipline and correction. The exact words are: 'The way of the Lord is not just.'

B1 Sound familiar? The student has been kicked out of high school for the fourth time. This time he can't come back. He hasn't done any of his work. He spends all his time hanging out with his friends. He has shown total disrespect for the teachers. He hasn't followed any of the rules. And you know what he says, when his parents call the pastor over? "Why is God letting this happen to me?" "The way of the Lord is not fair." Blame it on God.

2 The young man had just completed 20 years of schooling. He was about to go through the graduation ceremony the next morning. He was engaged to be married in 3 weeks. He had just received his assignment to be a pastor. Taking his fiancée home after a pregraduation dinner, he is killed by a drunken driver who had crossed the center line and hit him head on. "How could God let something like that happen?" "The way of the Lord is not fair." Blame it on God.

3 The young man is 38 years old. He was always a little overweight. He never really did any sports. He didn't watch his intake. Nobody even noticed when he kept adding pounds every year. There he is. In the hospital. Massive heart attack. All hooked up to machines. All 300 pounds of him. You know what he said? "How could God let this happen? I have a wife and two children to support." "The way of the Lord is not just."

C1 Why do we blame God? It's easier to blame God than admitting that I haven't done my schoolwork. It is easier to blame God than admitting that I have wasted all of my time. It's easier to blame God than admitting that I have made it difficult for my teachers to do their job. It's easier to blame God than admitting that I have been the problem. If I am not the problem, then I don't have to feel bad. Isn't life about feeling good anyway? If I am not the problem, then I don't have to do anything to fix it. Isn't life about taking the easy way out?

2 Why do we blame God? It's easier to blame God than admit that the person who was drunk was responsible. Why? Because if we assign responsibility to the drunk driver, we will have to take responsibility for the times that we have been behind the wheel of our vehicles not in complete control of our reflexes. It is easier to blame God than to admit that it could just as well have been me who killed that student in that head on crash.

3 Why do we blame God? It's easier to blame God than to have to admit that it was our foolishness which put us in this mess. It's easier to blame God than to have to admit that our laziness and our failure to take care of ourselves is actually total lack of thankfulness to the Lord for His gift of our bodies and lives.

D1 What is the Lord's answer to the accusation that He is unfair? "Hear, O house of Israel: Is my way unjust? Is it not your ways that are unjust? {26} If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin, he will die for it; because of the sin he has committed he will die." God has told us in His law what is pleasing and displeasing to Him. He has told us that if we don't follow His Law, our lives on this earth will be messed up, He will cut us off from this life, and He will cut us off from His blessings. Sounds fair.

2 What is the Lord's answer to the accusation that He is unfair? {27} "But if a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he will save his life. {28} Because he considers all the offenses he has committed and turns away from them, he will surely live; he will not die. {29} Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Are my ways unjust, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are unjust? {30} "Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. {31} Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? When a person is led by the Lord to live his life to the Lord in response to all that God has done for him, he will live. He will continue to experience the closeness of the Lord and all of the Lord's blessings. That is just and fair. It is Israel who, expecting to be blessed while they were living lives in opposition to God, is unfair and unjust.

3 When we blame God for our problems we are either overlooking our sins or someone else's sin, or we are insisting that nothing in our lives needs any correction. That is not an honest evaluation.

E1 But the Lord doesn't enjoy punishing anyone. {32} For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live! The Lord wants to bring us closer to Him, wants us to receive His love and mercy, wants us to have our sins removed, wants our hearts to be clean and new. How can He carry out that attitude toward us if He is a just God?

2 He can love us and save us because He already killed us for our sins in Christ our Substitute. He can love us and give us forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life because He has satisfied His justice in Jesus the Christ. When we blame God for something, let's blame Him for something for which He is responsible. Our salvation. LORD Jesus, keep leading me to repentance and obedience.