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A Call for Repentance

Definitions in **bold** letters are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance
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or Roget's Thesaurus – **August 16, 2015**

Ezekiel 18:1-13, 31-32

Introduction: Ezekiel now outlines the behaviour of the RIGHTEOUS and the WICKED in terms of THREE generations in one family, a **righteous man** and a **wicked son**, followed by a **righteous grandson**. The point behind this is to stress individual responsibility. Each will be judged in accordance with **his response** to God's revealed will through the Scriptures. At this time this would include the Law of Moses and the early prophets. He also stresses the dangers of turning away from God and the opportunity for **repentance** and **forgiveness** always available. He finishes with a call to such repentance, a change of heart and spirit. (Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=eze&ch=18#1>)

Ezekiel 18:1-3, 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**? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall **NOT** have occasion ANY MORE to **use** this proverb in Israel.

NOTE: "This **false proverb**, untrue on the face of it, was singularly inapplicable by Israel in their situation, because they were by no means innocent of wrong doing, being, in fact, actually worse than their fathers."

In response to Israel's use of this **evil proverb**, God swore with a mighty oath, that he would stop their use of it at once, because it reflected **against** the **justice** of God Himself. "Evidently, the people thought that they were paying for sins of Manasseh, because nearly everyone in that generation believed that the sins of the fathers could actually be visited upon their children. There was a note of self-acquittal here, also, fatalism, despair, and a what's the use? attitude, what avails the moral struggle? Deeper still, there was a question of **God's justice**."

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=eze&ch=18#1>)

Thought 1. This proverb was being used by a number of people that didn't know the mind, nor his love concerning Israel, and all of mankind, although they spoke as if they did. Also, they'd forgotten what was written would happen to anyone who broke his covenant.

Exodus 20:5-6, You shall **NOT** worship them or serve them; for **I**, the Lord your God, am a **JEALOUS** God, **visiting (avenge [take vengeance], punish)** the **iniquity** of the fathers **ON** the children, on the **third...** the **fourth** generations of those who **HATE** Me, but showing **lovingkindness** to thousands, to those who **LOVE** me and keep my commandments.

Jealous defined 7067, jealous [demanding exclusive devotion; intolerant of rivalry].

NOTE: This necessarily implies - **IF** the children walk in the steps of their fathers; for no MAN can be **condemned** by **Divine justice** for a **crime** of which he was **never guilty**; see Ezekiel 18. Idolatry is however particularly intended, and VISITING SINS of this kind refers principally to **national judgments**. By withdrawing the Divine protection the idolatrous Israelites were delivered up into the hands of their enemies, from whom the gods in whom they had trusted could not deliver them. This God did to the third and fourth generations, i.e., successively; as may be seen in every part of the Jewish history, and particularly in the book of Judges. And this, at last, became the grand and the only effectual and lasting means in his hand of their final deliverance from idolatry; for it is well known that **after** the **Babylonish captivity** the Israelites were so completely saved from idolatry, as never more to have disgraced themselves by it as they had formerly done. These national judgments, thus continued from generation to generation, appear to be what are designed by the words in the text, Visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, etc. (Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/acc/view.cgi?bk=ex&ch=20#1>)

Ezekiel 18:4, 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**.

NOTE: Behold, all souls are mine,... By creation; they being the immediate produce of his power; hence he is called "the Father of spirits", **Hebrews 12:9**, or the souls of men; these he has an apparent right unto; a property in; a dominion over; they are **accountable** to him, and will be JUDGED impartially by him: **as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine**; and therefore must be thought to have as great a respect and affection for the one as for the other; for the soul of a son as for the soul of a father; and not deal partially in favour of the one, and cruelly and unrighteously with the other: **the soul that sinneth, it shall die**; the soul that continues in sin, without repentance towards God, and FAITH in Christ, shall **die** the **second death**; shall be separated from the presence of God, and endure his wrath to all eternity: OR the meaning is, that a person that is guilty of gross sins, and continues in them, shall personally suffer... (Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/geb/view.cgi?bk=eze&ch=18#1>)

Revelation 20:4-6, And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and **judgment** was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the WITNESS of **Jesus**, and for the word of God, and which had **not worshipped** the **beast**, neither his image, **neither** had received **his mark** upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and **reigned** with Christ a **thousand years**. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the **first (best) resurrection**. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the SECOND DEATH hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall **reign** with him a **thousand years**.

Revelation 20:11-15, And I saw a great white throne... And I saw **the dead**, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. ...And death and hell were cast into the **lake of fire**. This is the **second DEATH**. And whosoever was NOT found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

NOTE: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither the children for the fathers: **every man** shall be **put to death** for his **own sin**." The inherited guilt of sin in infants is an awful fact, but one met by the atonement (reconciliation [the means by which

sinner are reconciled and brought into a state of favor with God)) of Christ; **Rom. 5:14**, "Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression;" but it is of adults that he speaks here.

Whatever penalties fall on communities for connection with sins of their fathers, individual adults who repent shall escape, as Josiah did (**2 Kings 23:25-26**), and even Manasseh himself (**2 Chronicles 33:12-13**). This was NO new thing, as some misinterpret the passage here: it had been always God's principle to **punish only the guilty**, and not also the innocent for the sins of their fathers. God does not here change the principle of His administration, but is merely about to manifest it so personally to each that the Jews should no longer throw on God, and on their fathers, the blame which was their own. The **soul that sinneth, it shall die** – and it alone (**Romans 6:23**); not also the innocent. (Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jfu/view.cgi?bk=eze&ch=18#1>)

Romans 6:22-23, But now being **made FREE from SIN**, and become SERVANTS to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting **life**. For the **wages** of **sin** is **DEATH**; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thought 1. Under this New Covenant, the sin that is unto death is to NOT believe on Jesus. And once a person has believed, they die IF they STOP believing on Jesus.

John 3:18, He that **believeth** on him is not condemned: but he that **believeth not** is condemned **already**, because he hath **not BELIEVED** in the **name (authority)** of the only begotten Son of God.

John 16:7-9, Nevertheless I tell you the **truth**; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the **Comforter** will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will **reprove (convict)** the world of **sin**, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of **SIN**, because they **BELIEVE not** on me...

Hebrews 10:35, 38, Cast not away therefore your **confidence assurance** [FAITH]), which hath great recompence of reward.
...Now the **JUST** shall **LIVE** ([HAVE life, STAY alive]) by **FAITH**...

Ezekiel 18:5-9, *But if a man be JUST, and DO that which is lawful and right, 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, 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; 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, Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely LIVE, saith the Lord GOD.*

NOTE: But if a man be **just**. Here begins the illustration of God's **impartiality** in a series of supposed cases: Firstly, from Ezekiel 18:5-9, the just man; the excellences are selected in reference to the prevailing sins of the age, from which such a one stood aloof; hence, arises the omission of some features of righteousness which under different circumstances would have been desirable to be enumerated. Each age has its own besetting **temptations**, and the **just man** will be distinguished by his **guarding against** the special defilements, inward and outward, of his age.

Just ... lawful ... right - the duties of the second table of the law, which flow from the **FEAR of God**. **PIETY** (veneration or reverence of the Supreme Being, and love of his character) is the **root of all charity**: to render to each his own, as well to our neighbour as also to our God.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jfu/view.cgi?bk=eze&ch=18#1>)

Ezekiel 18:10-13, If he **beget** a **SON** that is a **robber**, a shedder of **blood**, and that **doeth** the like to any one of these things, And that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and **defiled** his neighbour's wife, 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, 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.

NOTE: THE UNGODLY SON OF A JUST FATHER - IF, as a number of scholars have suggested, there is a reference in these verses to Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah, then the place of murder first in this list that pertained to Manasseh would be appropriate; because that monarch is said to have filled Jerusalem with **innocent blood**. The variations in the list are not important.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=eze&ch=18#1>)

Ezekiel 18:14-18, 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, 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, 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, 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**.

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.

NOTE: THE CASE OF THE GODLY GRANDSON - "That hath withdrawn his hand from the poor ..." (Ezekiel 18:17). "This is to be understood in a **good sense**, to withhold his hand from oppressing the poor. He withdraws the hand that was tempted to exact the full legal claim against the poor."

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=eze&ch=18#1>)

Ezekiel 18:19-20, 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**. 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.

NOTE: Here it is stated both positively and negatively that God's government and God's justice are **eternally equitable** and **FAIR**. Again, if the example here has any reference to **Josiah**, there is a special significance that, "he hath kept all my statutes." This sheds light upon the false notion that only the moral considerations, not the ceremonial commandments, were involved in determining who was, or was not, righteous. Josiah, it will be recalled, brought Israel once more to **their duty** of **observing** the **Passover!**

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=eze&ch=18#1>)

Ezekiel 18:21-23, 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**. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his **righteousness** that he hath **done** he shall **live**. Have I any **pleasure (delight [JOY])** at all that the **wicked** should **die**? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and LIVE?

NOTE: "Keep all my statutes ..." (Ezekiel 18:21). Note the word all. Again, we see the truth that God is not merely concerned with **moral requirements** of the holy Law, but with the strict human observance of ALL OF IT.

The strong inference here that the passage may indirectly refer to **Manasseh** occurs in the fact that despite his being such an evil monarch, at the end of his days, Manasseh turned from his sins and returned to the true God.

Regarding Ezekiel 18:21, here, Beasley-Murray stated that, "A man is not only free from the sins of his father, but he may also be free from his own sins, if he so wishes; **he can repent** and **turn away from them.**"

This passage regarding the possibility of a man becoming free from his own sins has been called, "the most precious word in the whole Book of Ezekiel."^[14] What is God's ultimate objective for human life? It certainly is **NOT** the **destruction** of the **wicked**. As an apostle said, "God is longsuffering to you-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). "God's pleasure is that the wicked should turn from his evil way, and live."^[15]

(Source: <http://www.study-light.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=eze&ch=18#1>)

Ezekiel 18:24-26, 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**. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is **not EQUAL** (evenly balanced; impartial; equitable; **JUST**). Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? 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**.

Thought 1. Even though we have been made the righteousness of God by FAITH in Jesus, we still have the ability to CHOOSE to turn from him, and no longer have faith in him.

1 Timothy 4:1, Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the **latter times** **SOME** shall **DEPART from** the **FAITH**, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils...

1 John 5:16, If any man see his brother **sin a sin** which is **NOT** unto **DEATH**, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin NOT unto death.

There is a SIN unto **DEATH**: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

Romans 11:18-22, Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were **broken off**, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of **unbelief** they were broken off, and thou **standest by FAITH**. Be not highminded, but FEAR: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare **not** thee. Behold therefore the **goodness** and **SEVERITY** (harshness) of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, **IF** thou **CONTINUE** in his goodness: **otherwise** thou also shalt be **CUT OFF**.

Faith defined 4102, pistis pronounced pis'-tis from 3982; persuasion, i.e. moral conviction (of religious truth), especially RELIANCE upon Christ for salvation; abstractly, CONSTANCY in such profession.

Ezekiel 18:27-29, 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**. Because he **considereth**, and **turneth** away from **all** his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely **LIVE**, he shall **not DIE**. 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?

NOTE: ...when the wicked man **turneth** away from his wickedness **Repents** of his sins, and forsakes the vicious course of life he has lived: **and doeth that which is lawful and right**; or "judgment" and "righteousness"; that which is agreeable to the law and will of God, and is just and right between man and man: **he shall save his soul alive**; from famine, pestilence, the sword, or captivity; he

shall be preserved, and not be involved in calamities and distress: or, "shall **quicken** (make ALIVE) his **own soul**"; which, in a spiritual sense, is only done by the Spirit and grace of God, and not by man himself; nor is the enjoyment of eternal life by the works of men, but through the grace of God, and righteousness of Christ.

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/geb/view.cgi?bk=eze&ch=18#1>)

Proverbs 16:6, By MERCY and TRUTH iniquity is purged: by the **FEAR (reverence)** of the Lord men **depart FROM EVIL**.

Luke 15:7, I say unto you, that likewise **JOY** shall be in heaven over **one sinner** that repenteth, **more** than over ninety and nine **just** persons, which need **no** repentance.

John 3:14-16, And **AS** Moses lifted up the **serpent** in the wilderness, even so **must** the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should **not perish**, but have **eternal life**. For God so **LOVED** the world, that he **gave** his only begotten Son, that whosoever **believeth** in him should **not perish**, but have everlasting **life**.

Ezekiel 18:30-31, 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. 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?

NOTE: The **case** being **fairly stated**, the charge removed, instances to the contrary given, the Lord, as Judge, proceeds to bring the controversy to an issue, and to pass the definitive sentence, and to deal with them in the way of his providence as **they deserved**: **everyone according to his ways, saith the Lord God**; not according to the ways of their father, but according to their OWN WAYS: this refers, not to the last and general judgment, but to some sore temporal punishment, which God, as the **righteous Judge**, would inflict upon them for THEIR SINS, according to the just desert of them; but whereas, notwithstanding all their wickedness, insolence, and blasphemy, the Lord was desirous of showing mercy to them, rather than proceed to strict justice...

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/geb/view.cgi?bk=eze&ch=18#1>)

NOTE: "Make you a new heart and a new spirit ..." (Ez. 18:31). O no, a man cannot create in himself a new heart; but he can so order **his behavior** that God will indeed create in him a new heart. God commands men to "Save yourselves from this wicked generation" (Acts 2:40); but men cannot "save themselves," except in the sense that they can **comply with** the **conditions** that will enable God to save them! Men cannot "create" a new heart in themselves, but they can **repent** of their wickedness and **turn to God** who will then **"give them"** a new heart. As Leal put it:

"Man cannot indeed create either a new heart or a new spirit; God only can give them to anyone. But a man can and should come to God to receive them; he can repent and turn to God and thus allow both heart and spirit to be renewed by the Spirit of God."

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=eze&ch=18#1>)

Ezekiel 18:32, For I have NO pleasure in the **death** of him that **dieth**, saith the Lord God: wherefore **turn yourselves**, and **LIVE** ye.

NOTE: What an absurd thing it is for you to choose death and damnation rather than life and salvation. Note, The reason why sinners die is because they **will** die; they will go down the way that leads to death, and not come up to the terms on which life is offered. Herein sinners, especially sinners of the house of Israel, are **most unreasonable** and act **most unaccountably**. 3. The God of heaven has no delight in our ruin, but desires our welfare (v. 32): I have **no pleasure** in the death of him that dies, which implies that he has pleasure in the recovery of those that repent... (Source: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/ezekiel/18.html>)