

TURN TO CHRIST JESUS AND LIVE (EZEKIEL 18)

"Ezekiel, [was] a priest whose name means God will strengthen [yeh-khez-KAY-el (chazaq-el), of which we should all be Ezekiels, where God is our strength! He:], was among the Jewish exiles carried away to Babylon between the first and final deportations of Judah (**2 Kings 24:11-16**). His book shows him as a man of stern integrity and strong purpose, completely devoted to the practices of his priestly religion...Unlike the pre-exilic prophets, whose ministry was primarily either to Judah or to the ten-tribe kingdom, or to both, Ezekiel was the voice of the LORD to "the whole house of Israel." Speaking broadly, the purpose of Ezekiel's ministry was to keep before the generation born in exile the national sins which had brought Israel so low (for example, **Ezekiel 14:23**); to sustain the faith of the exiles by predictions of national restoration, of the execution of justice upon their oppressors, and of national glory under the Davidic monarchy."¹ **Hebrews 11** gives examples of those who lived by **faith** in the Old Testament times, and then summarizes for us in **Hebrews 12:1-2** saying, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the **sin which so easily ensnares us**, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our **faith**, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." So too then, we are reminded and warned and then also encouraged to continue in our **faith in Christ Jesus**. As one can read in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, not only did God punish Israel and their oppressors, but all of the nations who rejoiced in the fall of Israel and those who took advantage of their downfall. As **Proverbs 24:17-18** reminds us, "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him." Likewise **Proverbs 17:5** warns us, "He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished."

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[**Ezekiel 18:1-3**] The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, "What do you mean when you [the Israelites] 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," says the Lord God, "you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel."

[This saying or proverb that was being spoken by the people of Israel really has its roots going all the way to the garden of Eden of which Adam and Eve sinned against God. God had told them that they could eat of any tree EXCEPT the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and as God warned them "for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (**Genesis 2:17**) And as we know, the serpent deceived Eve by asking "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" (**Genesis 3:1**) That is beginning, on earth, of the

1 Scofield Study Bible, Oxford Press, 200, pg. 1094.

questioning of God's Word. There is a distinct difference between the searching out for understanding of what God's Word is saying and the flat-out rebellion or dismissing what is made known. "And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (**Genesis 3:2-5**) So Eve then took of the fruit and ate and then gave to Adam to eat. Consequently, the questioning of God's Word then led to the rebellion of God's Word. That curse then took effect, as God said it would, by the mere touching of the fruit alone, that was enough. For they did indeed die, spiritually speaking and they also eventually died physically, which would not have been the case otherwise. As the Apostle Paul explained, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." (**Romans 5:12**) Next, God confronted Eve and she told God that she had hid from Him because she was naked (physically but also spiritually speaking then, not covered by the grace of God). She ended up blaming the serpent and Adam passed the blame onto Eve for their transgression. Nevertheless, God spoke to the serpent saying, "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed [speaking of Christ Jesus]; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." (**Genesis 3:14-15**) [Enmity-hebrew "ebah", hostility, hatred.

Since we now have the knowledge of good and evil we are told by Solomon in **Proverbs 8:13**, "The fear of the Lord is to **hate evil**; **pride** and **arrogance** and the **evil way** and the **perverse mouth** I hate." The KJV uses the words "froward mouth". Froward meaning "Stubbornly contrary & disobedient; obstinate."² Likewise **Psalms 97:10** says, "You who love the Lord, **hate evil**! He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked." The Apostle Peter tells us, "Therefore, to you who believe [on Christ Jesus] He is precious; but to those who are **disobedient**, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the Chief Cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble, being **disobedient to the word**, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood** [of which God is our strength], a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you **out of darkness into His marvelous light**; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." (**1 Peter 2:7-10**) Back to Adam and Eve, as they were not covered anymore physically, but also having a

2 <https://www.wordnik.com/words/froward>

spiritual meaning as well, we are then told that the "Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them" (**Genesis 3:21**); which is symbolically the sacrifice of the covering that would later be established through the law with the animal sacrifices which was an image of what was to come, of the sacrifice that would ultimately not cover our sins, but take away our sins through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to **cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**"-1 **John 1:9**) So as through Adam sin entered the world, and all afterwards are born into that sin-nature, as the Apostle Paul has told us in **Romans 5**, he continued with the good news saying, "For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive **abundance of grace** and of the **gift of righteousness** will **reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.**")

Now the rebellious folks in Israel, in Ezekiel's testimony, were basically saying that they were being punished by God for the sins of their fathers, or forefathers. Jeremiah was told by God the same thing as He had told Ezekiel, saying, "And it shall come to pass, that as I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy, and to afflict, so **I will watch over them to build and to plant**, says the LORD. In those days they shall say no more: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge." (**Jeremiah 31:27-30**) As mentioned, while the root of that goes back to the Garden of Eden, it then becomes, for us, that our sins DO AFFECT others- family, friends, acquaintances, coworkers, etc. What was more closely related to their time, was what God had spoken through Jeremiah, the prophet. "And I will appoint over them four forms of destruction," says the Lord: "the sword to slay, the dogs to drag, the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. I will hand them over to trouble, to all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem." (**Jeremiah 15:3-4**) That was spoken by God in the time of the good King Josiah, who "did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left." (**2 Kings 22:2**) That was Josiah. He repaired the temple, and as they found the Book of the Law and read it to Josiah (**2 Kings 22**), long story short, we read that God, through the prophetess, Huldah, said to Josiah, "because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants [like the blessings and curses that God spoke of in **Deuteronomy 28-30**], that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the Lord. "Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave **in peace**; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place." ' "

So they brought back word to the king." (2 Kings 22:19-20) Josiah ended up reigning for 31 years and his downfall, sadly, was in possibly his pride or just in not seeking God's direction, as he was killed in battle against Necho (neh-koh), king of Egypt. He was not supposed to be in that battle, as we are told he "did not heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God." (2 Chronicles 35:22) Possibly that is where we get the phrase, "choose your battles wisely".

Unfortunately for Judah, there was not another Josiah or Hezekiah to come next to reign over Judah. While Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it", ultimately it is though up to that child, as they become of age, to decide for themselves which way they will go-towards the blessings or the curses. Neither of the good kings Hezekiah or Josiah had good sons to reign after them. As we read in Proverbs 17:10-13 last week, "Rebuke is more effective for a wise man than a hundred blows on a fool. An evil man seeks only rebellion; therefore a cruel messenger will be sent against him. Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly. Whoever rewards evil for good, evil will not depart from his house." Each person on this earth has to choose between the being a fool or choosing wisdom (in Christ). Each person has to choose between blessings from God or curses. Earlier in Ezekiel 14:20 God said, that once His wrath is being poured out "even [if] Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live," says the Lord God, "they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness." The best WE can do, based on God's justice and mercy is what God spoke to Solomon and all of Israel, "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

[Ezekiel 18:4-18 (Blessings vs. Curses)]

"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. But if a man is just and does what is lawful and right; if he has not eaten on the mountains, nor lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, nor defiled his neighbor's wife, nor approached a woman during her impurity; if he has not oppressed anyone, but has restored to the debtor his pledge; has robbed no one by violence, but has given his bread to the hungry and covered the naked with clothing; if he has not exacted usury nor taken any increase, but has withdrawn his hand from iniquity and executed true judgment between man and man; if he has walked in My statutes and kept My judgments faithfully – he is just; he shall surely live!" says the Lord God.

To summarize some of what is said next to shorten this message, God says, "If he [the father] begets a son who is/does one/all of those unrighteous things mentioned that the father did not do, "shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these

abominations, he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him." Once again, summarizing, God said, "If, however, he begets a son who sees all the sins which his father has done, and considers but does not do likewise; [then He again mentions those sins] "but has executed My judgments and 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, robbed his brother by violence, and did what is not good among his people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity."

[Ezekiel 18:19-32 (Turn and Live)]

Once again, for brevity's sake, in the last part of **Ezekiel 18**, God says that the one who practices righteousness will live and the one who practices iniquity shall die, as God pleads for each person to "**turn from his ways and live**". Then as God had been accused of not being fair He says, "O house of Israel, is it not **My ways which are fair**, and your ways which are not fair?" After all God is perfect in ALL of His Ways (**2 Samuel 22:31**) and His Works (**Deuteronomy 32:4**). God concludes the chapter by saying, "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a **new heart** and a **new spirit**. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord God. "Therefore **turn and live!**"

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That, according to the New Covenant in Christ Jesus, is found in **Ephesians 2:8-10**, " For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are **His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Jesus, in being accused of fellowshiping with sinners said, "**Those who are well have no need of a physician [ie-a new heart and new spirit], but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.**" (**Mark 2:17**) In God's perfect plan He chose for Israel to be blinded by the truth in Christ Jesus, generally speaking. But as we can read, "He [Jesus] came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (**1 John 1:11-13**) The Apostle Paul speaks to that by saying, "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the **law of righteousness**, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by **faith**, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and **whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.**" (**Romans 9:30-33**) Paul said to "pursue righteousness", which we attain, through Christ Jesus, and is the same as what God was pleading with Israel to "turn to Him to live". Turn in the Hebrew is

“shub” (shoob). Its equivalent in the Greek is metanoeo. In the Hebrew and the Old Testament, it was not just turning back to God but also the forsaking of sins as it means to turn back to God AND His ways. As Jesus preached, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**”, is metanoeo, and it is for us to recognize a need for change and then heeding to that need for change (a new heart & spirit). Jesus is that change as He said, “**I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me**” (**John 14:6**).

Now, that word pursue in the Greek is “dioko”. That has a negative meaning, to pursue aggressively like a hunter and is used in context to be those who are persecuting others. The positive side of “dioko” means to “earnestly pursue”, to “apprehend”.³ Examples of the positive are, **Romans 14:19** to “pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.” **1 Corinthians 14:1**, right after Paul’s love chapter in **1 Corinthians 13**, he says to “pursue love”. In **1 Thessalonians 5:15**, the Apostle Paul says, “See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.” **1 Timothy 6:3-12**, “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the **doctrine which accords with godliness** [you can’t have Jesus without godliness], he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that **godliness is a means of gain**. From such withdraw yourself. Now **godliness with contentment [in Christ Jesus]** is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man[woman] of God, flee these things and **pursue** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (**2 Timothy 2:22**) “Pursue peace with all people, and **holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.**” (**Hebrews 12:14**) “Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.” (**1 Peter 3:11**) How then are we to pursue righteousness, godliness, holiness, faith, love, peace, etc.? We are in the time of the “New Covenant” that is through Christ Jesus, as He died on a cross for our sins, taking our sins upon Himself, and He then raised from the dead

3 <https://biblehub.com/greek/1377.htm>

on the third day, conquering death, sin and evil so that we too can overcome, as the Apostle Paul said, that “sting of death”, and also that we may overcome sin and evil. Jesus had told His disciples, **“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper [parakletos: para-beside, kletos-makes a call (the perfect lawyer); intercessor, consoler, advocate, comforter], that He may abide with you forever– the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” (John 14:15-18)** Right after that, Jesus says, **“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”** Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, **“Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?”** Jesus answered and said to him, **“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.” (John 14:21-24)** His Word/commandments are summed in what Jesus said are the Great Commandments of God, to love Him with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind and to also love our neighbors as ourselves (**Mark 12:30-31**). Jesus was actually referring to the book of **Deuteronomy (6:5, 10:19)** to love God with all that is in us and to also love the stranger. Therefore, **“pursue love!”**

But we are not just following the letter of the law, in legalism, we are following Christ in Communion/Fellowship with Him! He is who we are pursuing, **“dioko”** for the **“koinonia”**: fellowship, sharing, contribution, participation, because we love Him as He first loved us and as He is our Good Shepherd who leads us (**John 10:11**)! The Apostle John says in **1 John 1:6-7**, **“If we say that we have fellowship [koinonia] with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light [as He IS the Light], we have fellowship [koinonia] with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”** In that fellowship that we have in Christ we then are bearing the fruit of the Spirit, **“love, joy, peace, patience [longsuffering], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:22-25)** It is in Christ Jesus that we have (**1 Corinthians 1:30**) Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. And we are not **merely** following Jesus to live. Jesus said, **“I AM the Door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:9-10)**