

**Pastor Paul Bawden  
Grace Evangelical Church  
Sunday, July 4, 2010  
Communion Sunday  
"Glory That's Sour Grapes & Teeth Set on Edge"  
Ezekiel 18**

Four expectant fathers were in Minneapolis hospital waiting room, while their wives were in labor. The nurse arrived and announced to the first man, "Congratulations sir, You're the father of twins."

"What a coincidence" the man said with some obvious pride. "I work for the Minnesota Twins baseball team."

The nurse returned in a little while and turned to the second man, "You sir, are the father of triplets."

"Wow, That's really an incredible coincidence " he answered. "I work for the 3M Corporation." My buddies at work will never let me live this one down.

An hour later, while the other two men were celebrating, the nurse came back, this time she turn to the 3rd man - who had been quiet in the corner. She announced that his wife had just given birth to quadruplets.

Stunned, he barely could reply. "Don't tell me another coincidence?" asked the nurse. After finally regaining his composure, he said "I don't believe it, I work for the Four Seasons Hotel."

After hearing this, everybody's attention turned to the 4th guy, who had just fainted, flat out on the floor. The nurse rushed to his side and after some time, he slowly gained back his consciousness.

When he was finally able to speak, you could hear him whispering repeatedly the same phrase over and over again.

"I should have never taken that job at 7-Up "I should have never taken that job at 7-Up "I should have never taken that job at 7-Up..."

**Yes, being a father can have its joys and sometimes it challenges.**

**In our text today in Ezekiel 18:2 puts fathers in the spotlight.**

There was a proverb circulating in that day which said, "the fathers eat the sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge." This proverb was not just circulating among the captives in Babylon, it was also circulating among the Jews who were still living in Jerusalem for Jeremiah refers to it in his prophecy in Jeremiah 31:29.

The people of Israel were using this proverb to say that the reason they were in captivity was because of what their fathers did. Their fathers had disobeyed the Lord, so their being in captivity was not their fault but that of their fathers. Their fathers were to blame for what they were experiencing. The children are suffering for the sins of their fathers. It was not their responsibility so why should they be in captivity.

Note how God gives His perspective on this situation where the grown children are blaming their fathers for their captivity in Babylon.

Note God's teaching through Ezekiel.

**I. The family is God's creation (Ezekiel 18:3-4).**  
**1. This proverb is not going to be used in Israel anymore.**

It is not true. Grown children can't blame their fathers for being in captivity.

## **2. God has ownership of the individual.**

He is the creator of the father, of the son, and of the daughters.

The soul of the father is mine. The soul of the son is mine.

That's not a popular idea in our world today influenced by the evolutionary theory. With God not being one's Creator, a person can do what he or she wants without having any accountability. With God as one's Creator, that means each individual will give an account to Him.

## **3. Each person, father, son, and daughter is responsible to God for his or her actions.**

Now the Scripture does teach in Exodus 34:7 that the sins of the fathers can have an a cumulative effect on the children. Through repentance those sins can be forgiven, and a life can be lived for the LORD in His power.

**But ultimately each person is responsible to the Lord for His actions. God has created each person, so each person is responsible to HIM for His actions. Each person is accountable to God for his or her actions on earth.**

Then Ezekiel develops this teaching.

## **II. The father is responsible to God (Ezekiel 18:5-9).**

The righteous father gives evidence of his faith in the Lord by his actions of not being involved in idol worship, not eating of the sacrificial meals offered to idols, not committing adultery (18:6), by bring honest in business dealings (18:7 – Jews were to give loans interest free – Exodus 22:25), and not showing partiality in his relationships with people (18:8). He seeks to obey the Lord as directed in His Law, His statues and ordinances.

His faith walk with his Lord demonstrates He is not just responsible to the Lord but he treats others as the Lord would.

It's the same for us today. Through faith in Christ we give evidence of His character as we obey the Holy Spirit who lives within us through the Word of God.

## **III. The children are responsible to God (Ezekiel 18:10-18).**

### **1. The rebellious son (10-13).**

The righteous father may have a son who does not follow the Lord. He doesn't follow the footsteps of his righteous father. He does all the things the father doesn't do like being involved in idolatry, immorality, robs people, has selfish business dealings. He breaks God's law in every way.

This son will be punished by the Lord for his disobedience to the Lord, for he is personally responsible to the Lord for his actions. He will not go to be with the Lord at death, just the opposite, the lake of fire.

### **2. The grandson (14-18).**

The rebellious son has a son who observes all the wicked ways of his father – his idolatry, his immorality, his dishonesty, his taking advantage of people, and not following the Lord's commandments.

The grandson observes that ungodly lifestyle, and says to himself that he is not going to live like that. I am going to believe in the Lord and follow His ways in His law, His word.

The grandson that gives evidence of his faith in the LORD, he shall live (17). He will be with the Lord in his presence in heaven some day.

**Question: Should not this son bear the iniquity of his father?**

**The answer from God through Ezekiel is "NO!"**

**Look at Ezekiel 18:20:**

"The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity: the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself."

### **Conclusion:**

Each father is responsible for his actions before the Lord.  
Each mother is responsible to the Lord for her actions.

Each son or daughter is responsible for his or her actions before the Lord.  
Each daughter is responsible for his or her actions before the Lord.

Since each of us is responsible to the Lord for our actions, none of us can say that my father or mother, or my brother or my sister is responsible for my behavior.

Now certainly how a child is treated when growing up will have a bearing on his or her actions, Parents need to balance love and discipline. But ultimately as the man of wisdom pens, "A child is responsible for his actions whether they are pure and whether they are right" (Proverbs 20:11).

Children, then, in obeying their parents are really obeying the LORD. That's why Ephesians 6:1 says, "obey your parents in the Lord for this is right."

Young People, still at home you need to obey your parents, and in so doing you are obeying the Lord.

Both children and young people are ultimately responsible to the Lord for your actions.

All of us children, youth, and adults are individually responsible to the Lord for our behavior.

Ezekiel continues his teaching regarding this proverb regarding fathers and their children.

### **IV. God has no favorites (Ezekiel 18:21-32).**

These are some of the greatest verses in the Bible.

#### **1. God responds in mercy to those who turn to Him in faith (21-22, 27-28).**

God provides His forgiveness to those in sin who turn to Him and accept Him as their Savior. In the full revelation, this is recognizing one is a sinner, and then realizing that Christ died, was buried, and rose again for him or her to provide His forgiveness and eternal life. That's why Jesus said that He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He forgives the believer in Him and He remembers his sins no more (Psalm

The person gives evidence of his faith in the Lord by keeping the Lord's commandments and doing His will (Ezekiel 18:22).

God is truly a God of compassion and grace.

#### **2. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked – He wants people to live (23).**

**This verse ties in with I Timothy 2:4 "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Also II Peter 3:9 – God is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."**

This is a great reminder today, that God does not enjoy having to send people to a Christ-less eternity in the lake of fire forever. Those who don't respond to the Lord in faith have determined their destiny to be separated from God forever. God is not out wanting to send people to hell. They send themselves their by not accepting Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

### **3. A person who rejects the Lord will be judged (24, 26).**

Ezekiel, then, presents the person who claims to be righteous but turns away from God and becomes involved in all kinds of idolatry and immorality. He will also be punished by the Lord.

**This is a difficult verse to understand.**

**It either means that the righteous person dies prematurely because of his sin.**

**OR the person gave some evidence of being righteous before God, but really wasn't genuinely born again by the Spirit of God.**

It is like Jesus' teaching on the seed and the sower. The first three seeds fell on ground (spiritual heart) that looked like one was a follower of Christ, but because of one's spiritual heart condition that seed of God's word did not take root. People looked like real followers of Christ but they weren't. This could be the case here.

**Did the people in Ezekiel's day respond positively to God's mercy and grace for forgiveness and eternal life???**

### **V. God was rejected by the people (Ezekiel 18:25, 29).**

Israel told Ezekiel, "The way of the Lord (the sovereign one) is not right" (25).  
"The way of the Lord (the sovereign One) is not right" (29).

#### **1. Rejected accountability and responsibility to God for their actions.**

When Israel heard God's teaching through Ezekiel that each person, father, mother, son, and daughter were accountable to God for their actions, they would not accept God's teaching that each person is accountable and responsible to God for his or her action. The people of Israel rejected such reality. **God is not our Creator.** We can run our own lives. We reject such nonsense.

**Romans 1:21-32 all over again here. It's the same story today. The popular idea is that we are not accountable to anybody but ourselves. I am god. I determine my own destiny. All brought about by the evolutionary thinking that permeates the public square. No Creator. I'm my own creator. Thusly, I am not accountable to any god. As a result our society is filled with idolatry, immorality, dishonesty, deceit, and denial of human responsibility. We are victims of our circumstances. Someone owes me the good life is an idea prevalent in our culture today.**

#### **2. Rejected God's offer of mercy and grace to those who turn to the Lord in faith for His forgiveness and eternal life.**

God told Israel that He had no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Rather, his pleasure was that he would see people turn to Him in repentance and accept Him as Savior and Lord. The people rejected that statement of our Lord. They felt that his punishment was not a sign that they should turn to the Lord. Rather that rebelled against God the more. They would not repent of their sin before the Lord.

#### **3. Rejected God's statement that hypocritical righteousness would bring His judgment (24).**

They thought that they could fool God by acting righteous when in reality they had sinful hearts that were against the Lord. They need to repent of their sin and accept the Lord as their Savior.

### **VI. Application of Ezekiel 18 to our lives today.**

#### **1. Each of us has been created by God.**

We bear his image with a spiritual make-up, a mind, will and emotion.

We all have a physical make-up – we are male or female.

That means we are owned by the Lord and responsible to Him for our actions.

Which means, as well, that we are eternally valuable because we are created by the personal, eternal God revealed in the Bible.

#### **2. Each of us stands in need of God's forgiveness.**

In Adam we all sinned, so we all have sinned and have come short of God's holiness (Romans 5:12). God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God loves us even in our sin and rebellion. His desire is for people to recognize who they are before Him, sinners, needing His forgiveness and grace.

### **3. God provides each of us His forgiveness and eternal life.**

People in the Old Testament believed God in the information He gave them. The sacrifices provided the temporary basis for God to grant His forgiveness – the blood was shed – God made the pardon. Of course this was all looking forward to the coming of Christ to die on the cross, to shed His blood, for the forgiveness of our sin, He was buried, and rose again the third day, to demonstrate that God had provided us His forgiveness and eternal life. Christ was our substitute – the Just for the unjust as Peter tells us (I Peter 3:18),

### **4. Through faith in Christ, we come into a right relationship with HIM.**

As many as received Him to them He gave the right to become the children of God –born into His spiritual family (John 1:12). We are also called His sons and daughters by adoption, place as mature sons and daughters in His family (Romans 8:14-17). We can call God our "Papa" and take all our cares, problems, and challenges to Him in prayer, for He cares for us.

### **5. Coming into a right relationship with the Lord, we become citizens of heaven.**

**Philippians 3:20** reads, **"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, the exertion of the** power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

Believers in Christ have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27) – God knows our name, and Jesus is preparing a mansion for us in that New Jerusalem where we will live in the new heaven and earth forever and ever.

Yes, God has his census and He knows those who are His. I trust that your name is on His eternal census record, the Lamb's Book Of Life. If so, you can praise the Lord that He is in control of His world.

### **5. As citizens of heaven, we respond to the Lord in obedience as we live for Him on planet earth.**

#### **1. Individually.**

We can't live the life with God on our own. We need to depend on the indwelling Holy Spirit to do His will and follow HIM. Daily we say, "No", to the old desires of the flesh, and "Yes" to God to do His will as revealed in the Word of God.2.

#### **2. Our physical families.**

Certainly the earthly father represents the heavenly Father to his wife and children. As one writer has suggested, the father fulfills the offices of Christ to His wife and family as he is their king, their protector and provider, he is held responsible for what goes on in the family, a prophet, by his example and words he shares about Christ as he has opportunity; Then, dad, is also a priest as he prays for his wife and family, and serves them in whatever way he can. He seeks to represent Christ to His family.

**And as God told the nation of Israel, each person in the family is responsible to the Lord for His actions. A person can blame God, or the devil, or another person, but each of us is responsible to the Lord for what he thinks, the attitudes that he has, and the actions he carries out. All in the family should be seeking to obey the Lord. Not always easy, and there are bumps along the way, but that is what God's goal is for the family, and I'm sure it's yours as well.**

#### **3. Our church family.**

God desires that we have the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Yes, we will have disagreements, but we must seek the mind of the Lord in all that we do. We accept one another, and work together to be a part of building Christ's universal church through this local body.

#### 4. In our daily contacts, work, and at school.

We seek to serve the Lord in obedience wherever He puts us. That's why Paul told the Colossians, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for me" (3:23). For it's from the Lord that you receive the reward of your inheritance.

#### 5. In our country as citizens of the U.S.A.

On this 4<sup>th</sup> of July it's well to thank the Lord for the country that we live in, and the freedoms we still enjoy.

Paul tells us that we are to pray for those in authority over us (I Timothy 2:1-6).

Romans 13 tells us as well that we are to live under the authority of government God has put in place. Yes, God ordains government but that doesn't mean that God approves of some of the governments in power. If government takes away freedom to worship and live for the Lord as the Bible teaches, one has to follow the Bible. This is why there is the persecuted church today. And we see things happening in our country today that cause us concern. Thank the Lord for the Alliance Fund and the Liberty Counsel and others who are seeking to keep our freedoms from being taken away.

But July 4<sup>th</sup> 1776, 234 years ago, there was the signing of what we know as the Declaration of Independence.

David Barton, founder of Wallbuilders says that 95% of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were evangelical Christians. Even though Franklin and Jefferson are called deists they do not fit the description. A deist believes in an impersonal God.

Franklin called for daily prayer at the convention because he said that God answered prayer and they saw it during the Revolution.

Even Jefferson did nothing to inhibit the growth of Christianity, although he had a different definition of Christianity than those who were orthodox had.

Then Barton adds, "Just because today's Christianity uses a different set of terms doesn't mean those (old terms) were not Christian. In the case of George Washington, he used 84 different ways of describing God. He used terms such as Good Shepherd, Divine Disposer of Events and Divine Author of our blessed religion.

**Words of the Declaration Of Independence most familiar to us are; "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."**

There is much more to the Document itself, but these words certainly uphold the biblical God who gives His creation responsibility and accountability and the freedom to serve Him.

Our Country fathers knew what would make a country great. They knew what responsibility and accountability they had to God and each other.

**The eternal Creator God acknowledged in this historic document has not changed.**

People want to live as if there is no Creator God. If that continues, our beloved country will end up like other countries who have forgotten God.

May we continue to pray for our great land that a spiritual awakening will take place. Let's pray for our leaders that they will not be willful to follow their own dictates but look to the Lord to lead our country in freedom and victory over our enemy.

We are in a spiritual battle today. Yes, the horse is prepared for battle but victory belongs to the Lord.

**May we live in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ portrayed this table before us today -- the table of victory over sin, the evil one, the old nature, and death itself.**

**Let's live victoriously in Christ depending upon the power of God's Spirit this week for the glory of God, taking responsibility for our actions before the Lord as citizens of heaven living as citizens of this beloved country.**

**Then fathers won't eat sour grapes and children's teeth won't be set on edge.**

**God will be glorified through each us!!**