

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

You asked the exiles, “Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?” (Ezek 18:23). What wonderful words of life! I praise you today as the God who desires “all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4). How grateful I am to know that I can “turn and live!” (Ezek 18:32). Praise the LORD!

Today in Your Word

Today you shared with me more of Ezekiel’s prophecy to the exiles in Babylon. The people responded to your story of Jerusalem’s adultery and wickedness by quoting this proverb: “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge” (Ezek 18:2). They were accusing you of punishing them for the sins of their fathers (Ezek 18:29). You replied in the strongest possible terms: “As I live, declares the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel” (Ezek 18:3). Your wrath and judgment for sin does not fall on the innocent. Instead, “the soul who sins shall die” (Ezek 18:4). This teaches me that while the wickedness of earlier generations may have consequences that affect me in the present, you will never hold me guilty or punish me for the sins that someone else committed. Your promise to visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children was for “those who hate me” (Exod 20:5). Children who follow in their parent’s wicked ways will justly receive such a visitation (cf. 2 Chr 21:12–15; Matt 23:32). Ezekiel also reminded the people of what you said through Moses: “Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin” (Deut 24:16). A wicked son would not be declared innocent because of his father’s righteousness, and a righteous son would not be punished because of his father’s wickedness (Ezek 18:20). This teaches me that each individual stands on their own before you. I’m innocent or guilty based on my own decisions. Ezekiel concluded by stating that the wicked who repent will live and the righteous who rebel will die. It’s clear that you were speaking of more than *physical* life and death, for what profit is there for the wicked to live in this life, if they will die eternally in the next? If that were true, your call to “turn and live” would ring hollow indeed! No, you were speaking of the life that comes from a “new heart and a new spirit” (Ezek 18:31). Such life will last forever because it is united with the source of life, Jesus Christ. In the same way, the death that comes from apostasy and rebellion will also last forever. “The soul who sins shall die,” and that death is *eternal* separation from you in hell.

Reflection

Am I coasting on the righteous decisions of the past instead of living obediently in the present? If so, I’m deceiving myself, and my iniquity will be my ruin (Ezek 18:30).

Request

Father, give me a present, living faith—a faith that holds fast to your word and responds in obedience to your commands! May my life always bring honor and praise to the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Thanksgiving

Thank you for the knowledge that I will not be held accountable for the sins of my parents. I will stand before you and be judged for my own decisions. Truly, the way of the Lord is right (Ezek 18:25)!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “[Sinners! Turn, Why Will Ye Die?](#)” – Charles Wesley.

Meditation Verse: Ezekiel 20:44.