

Series: Questions

Title: Is Not God's Way Equal and Your Ways Unequal?

Text: Ezekiel 18: 1-32

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In Ezekiel 18, God asks sinners this question: **Ezekiel 18: 1: The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, 2: 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?**

The children of Israel accused God of unrighteousness saying he punished them for their father's sins—God says, **Ezekiel 18: 25: Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?....**

Notice God's *way* is singular, man's *ways* are plural.

Proverb 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the **ways** of death.

Question: Is Not God's Way Equal and Your Ways Unequal?

Proposition: God's Way is Equal, Righteous—God saves sinners by making our sins to be non-existent and robbing us in Christ's righteousness; it is our ways that are unrighteous, unequal.

Divisions: 1) The offense 2) God's sovereign justice 3) God's just mercy 4) God's application

THE OFFENSE

Ezekiel 18: 2:...The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

What am I guilty of if I say that God is making me suffer for the sins of others? By this they were doing three very wicked things. If we judge someone else or if we blame someone else for the suffering God has sent in our lives then we do these three very wicked things.

One, they were accusing their fathers of sin. If we blame others judging another as guilty of sin, we are absolute total hypocrites because we are guilty of the same things.

Two, by accusing their fathers they justified themselves. They shifted blame to justify themselves. They were saying we have not sinned, it is not our fault these things are happening in our lives. Self-righteous pride is the core problem when we accuse others of sin to justify ourselves

Three, worst of all, they accused God of injustice. By blaming others when we suffer in a trial, which God has sent directly to us personally, then we are accusing God of unrighteousness. It is accusing God of being unequal, unfair, unrighteous.

The apostle Paul gives this list of horribly evil sins:

Romans 1: 29: Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30: Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31: Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Be sure to get what God says next through Paul.

Romans 2: 1: Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

Whenever you and I judge another, whosoever you are, you and I are condemning ourselves because we are guilty of every single sin we judge others for. That is true of you and me and all sinners.

It is a sure indication that a believer has been temporarily overcome by our sin-nature when we judge others. It means we have ceased seeing what wicked, base, vile sinners we each are in ourselves. We are being self-righteous, proud, to self-justify ourselves as righteous and others as sinners.

This condemning spirit comes from our dead sin-nature. It is the spirit of the devil. After Adam fell into sin, he did exactly what the devil does. Speaking to God, Adam said,

Genesis 3: 12:...The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

We who believe hate to hear unregenerate sinners reject the gospel and call God unrighteous. They reject God's glory in choosing whom he will and passing by whom he will by saying "God is not fair."

Romans 9: 13: As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. 14: What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15: For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Yet we do the same thing when we judge others or blame others for the suffering God sent us. We call God unrighteous.

When unregenerate sinners hear that God is sovereign to do with his own what he will; when they hear we are not saved by our will but by God's will. They say, "Then God is unrighteous to charge anyone with sin."

Romans 9: 19: Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20: Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?

Brethren, we saw from Ezekiel 17 that if God sends me a trial personally, it is not because of someone else's sins, it is to correct me personally. But if I shift the blame to another then not only am I not benefiting from the correction, I am unrighteous because I am judging another as the cause, while I self-righteously justify myself. Worst of all, I am blasphemously accusing God of unrighteousness. Let us judge our own selves. Let us humbly confess our own sins to God. Let us glorify God for making us benefit from his faithful correction.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN AND JUST

Ezekiel 18: 3: As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have *occasion* any more to use this proverb in Israel. 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.

God declares through the prophet Ezekiel that he is sovereign and just in his dealings with his people. God created all souls—all souls are God's—he can do with us what he will. We all fell into sin and death in Adam—God was not obligated to save anyone. But thankfully from eternity God chose a multitude no man can number. Will we call God unrighteous for being good to a multitude he chose?

Matthew 20:15: Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

God did not have to choose to save anybody but he did. It is his sovereign right to choose whom he will and pass by whom he will. That is God's glory (Ex 33: 18-19).

Truth is God is holy and just. In all his dealings with us God only does right. His judgement is right and just. God says, "*THE soul that sinneth, IT shall die!*" If you perish, it will be for your own sin, no one else's. You will not be condemned because of your father's sins, only your own—"THE soul that sinneth, IT shall die."

Brethren do not be confused. God is not negating federal headship here. This has nothing to do with Adam being our Head of with Christ being the Head of God's elect. God is simply showing that he is sovereign and just. He is declaring that he judges the individual for his own doing, not for another's.

The children of Israel were under the covenant of works so God uses the law to give them a *hypothetical illustration*. God is not even suggesting that any sinner can keep the law. None can—"There is none righteous, no not one" (Rom 3:10). It is not keeping the law simply to give it your best shot. In order to fulfill the law it takes full obedience in heart as well as deed without sin.

James 2:10: For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

By this illustration, God is declaring that if a man could keep the law then he is just and God will deal with him justly. But for the man who breaks God's law, God will deal with him justly—THE soul that sinneth, IT shall die; THE soul that is just, IT shall live.

So God gives a *hypothetical illustration* using a father, his son and his son's son.

The father kept the whole law—v9: **Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.**

The father has a son who broke the law—13...**shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.**

The son's son keeps the law—v17...**he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. 18: 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. 19: Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? [God says no] 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. 20: 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.

Be sure to get this. The only way any sinner can be just with God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ alone fulfilled the law. He did it for his elect people. Christ said, "I lay down my life for the sheep" (Jn 10:15).

In verse 7, it is Christ who *restored his people who were debtors*—by giving the law perfect obedience unto the death of the cross which his people could not pay.

In verse 7, it is Christ who *hath dealt his bread to his hungry people—he is the Bread—the Life*—by whom the Spirit of God regenerates each one he redeemed and gives eternal life (Jn 6: 33-35, 51).

In verse 7, Christ *covered his naked people* with the garment of his righteousness through faith in him.

In verses 7 & 8, Christ is the only Just Man who "*withdrew his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man, Hath walked in God's statutes, and hath kept God's judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.*"

Every elect child was in Christ and did what Christ did so that we are just in Christ and shall surely live. Through God-given faith in Christ, God declares Christ's righteousness is the believer's righteousness.

Isaiah 54: 17: No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD.

"*The righteousness of the righteous*" for which God declares an individual sinner just is the Lord our Righteousness through faith in him. "*The wickedness of the wicked*" for which God condemns the individual sinner is that sinner rejecting Christ. Christ declared his plainly,

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 of the only begotten Son of God. 19: And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20: For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. 21: But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God [wrought by Christ].

Christ promised that when the Holy Spirit is come he will convince his people of sin, righteousness and judgement. He said,

John 16:9: Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10: Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11: Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

So in God's illustration he is not saying that a sinner can be saved by keeping the law. It is by the "faith of Jesus Christ"—that is, the faithfulness of Christ in fulfilling God's law for his people, that we are given his righteousness through believing on him. God says through the apostle Paul,

Galatians 3: 21...if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

GOD IS JUSTLY MERCIFUL

Ezekiel 18: 21: 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. 22: All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. 23: Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: *and* not that he should return from his ways, and live? 24: 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.

Since Christ bore away the sin of his people, God is just to send the Holy Spirit and regenerate us and grant us repentance. God is just to show us mercy.

Every sinner is wicked himself. That means we are guilty of the whole law of God. But if the sinner turns from all his sins, including his so-called righteousnesses, and casts all his care on Christ then through faith God declares that in Christ he has kept all God's law. He has done that which is lawful and right because Christ did it for his people. God is just to show him mercy because Christ answered to the law, satisfying justice, for all who God draws to Christ in saving faith.

Not only does God declare him righteous in Christ, God remembers his sins no more—"his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him." God is just. Those sins had to be paid for. So God sent his own Son for

his people and Christ satisfied God's justice for his people. Christ is our Scapegoat. He bore the sins of his people away unto a land not inhabited when he died. Therefore, before God we have no sins for God to impute.

Psalms 103:12: As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Isaiah 43:25: I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Jeremiah 50:20: In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

Christ's people were so one with Christ that when Christ fulfilled the law, God says of the believer—*"in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live."*

Sinner, you are the only one keeping yourself from Christ; no one else is to blame; God takes no delight in seeing you perish in your sins; God says come to Christ and live. God says, *"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?"*

But God is also just. The sinner who falsely professed to believe Christ, who proves it was false, who proves he was never born-again by turning from Christ, he shall die in his sins because he rejected Christ—*"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"*—the righteousness of Christ that he claimed to be his through faith shall not be his—*"in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."*

No one born of God ever turns from Christ so as to perish. This is one who proves he never was called of God. But the reprobate who forsakes Christ shall die. Christ's righteousness that he once claimed to rejoice in shall not be mentioned by God. He will stand before God only in his trespasses that he himself has trespassed. It will be his sin that he has sinned for which he shall die.

GOD'S APPLICATION

Ezekiel 18: 25: Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? 26: When a righteous man turneth away from [Christ] his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. 27: Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right [by believing on Christ], he shall save his soul alive. 28: Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 29: 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? 30: 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. 31: 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? 32: For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

Here is Gods' way: as badly as we have offended God, if a sinner comes to Christ for mercy, he receives us in mercy and forgives us all our trespasses for Christ's sake.

Here is our way: we accuse others to justify ourselves. We blame others for the trial God laid on us. We accuse God of unrighteously sending the trial. You and I who believe, even after being shown such great mercy, when another offends us (not nearly as badly as we have offended God), when they comes begging mercy and forgiveness, apart from Christ's constraining love, we will not show him mercy and forgiveness. Whose way is equal and whose is unequal?

God will judge us justly personally—*"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD."*

Sinner hear God's word, *"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? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."*

We know that God alone creates in his child a new heart and new spirit. But Peter and John said we purify our hearts by believing on Christ. Through faith we plunge into that fountain for sin and uncleanness. That is what God is calling for sinners to do—believe on Christ.

This general call is going forth as I preach the gospel. I am calling you to do what you cannot do apart from God's grace. It is like the valley of dry bones when God told Ezekiel to tell the dry bones, "Live." If you can believe on Christ, God's gets the glory. But God is simply saying turn from your sins and believe on Christ for why will ye die? God takes no pleasure in sinners perishing in their sins. Eternity in hell will not pay what you owe.

But none of us can blame God for personal unbelief. It is not God's fault. Your father's faith will not save you nor will your father's sins condemn you. If you perish it will be your fault. So why will you die when there is a fountain open? Why will you not believe on Christ? God says to you, personally, sinner, "*Turn and live ye.*"

May God send power with that command and make you cast all your care on Christ!

AMEN!