

Ezekiel Part 19 (Ezekiel 18)

1. As you read this chapter, you find the prophet answering the erroneous statements the Jewish exiles were making about God and their difficult situation. (Ezekiel 18:2, 19, 25, 29)
2. The struggle is portrayed on a personal level by the message of individual responsibility in 18:1–32.
3. The invitation of the message is to choose life rather than judgment and death.
4. The theme of the chapter is judgment that is deserved, and the central issue is who will receive judgment from God.
5. Judgment is a theme that is often applied (mistakenly) only to those not saved.
6. The Bible clearly teaches that those lost are judged because of sin, and it also teaches that believers will be judged according to their service.
7. Ezekiel made the case that everyone was equally accountable before God. Judgment was coming, and the people were accountable directly to God.
8. There are two main divisions in 18:1–32.
9. First, individuals were not guilty for sins committed by others or by their families (18:1–20).
10. The point of the second division (18:21–32) is that individuals were not bound by former sins, their own or others, and could alter the situation through repentance and faith.
11. The proposition is stated in vv. 21–24. Then there is a response to charges of divine injustice in vv. 25–29. The chapter concludes with a call to repentance in vv. 30–32.
12. **18:1–4** Here Ezekiel discusses the proverb used by the people to attempt to disavow personal responsibility.
13. It no doubt was a popular proverb among the Jews in Ezekiel's day. Jeremiah also mentioned this proverb. (Jeremiah 31:29)
14. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel concluded that it was not valid (18:3). The fathers, meaning their predecessors, had been guilty of gross sins deserving judgment.
15. As a result, the people had concluded that they were having to suffer for the sins of their ancestors, an injustice brought upon their nation by God (18:25).
16. Their situation, they claimed, was not their fault, and there was nothing they could do about it. They were innocent victims of an unfair God.

17. God's response through Ezekiel was that although sin had continuing effects, He never *punished* the righteous for the sins of the guilty.
18. So, in place of the proverb, he declared a new statement, "The soul that sins is the one who will die" (vv. 4, 20).
19. In other words, "The person who sins will be judged because of that sin." All people are personally responsible to God for their own sin.
20. **18:5–20** Next, Ezekiel presented three examples: (1) the righteous person who does "right" (vv. 5–9), (2) the wicked son of a righteous father (vv. 10–13), and (3) the righteous son of a wicked father (vv. 14–20).
21. As part of the first example, Ezekiel presents a code of ethics for a righteous person. Five principles characterize the life of this kind of person:
 - a. First is the general principle that they do "what is just and right" (v. 5).
 - b. Second, the righteous person worships Jehovah alone as the one true God (v. 6a).
 - c. Third, the righteous person carefully guards and maintains marital fidelity and moral purity (v. 6b).
 - d. Fourth, the righteous person is a good neighbor (vv. 7–8).
 - e. Fifth, the righteous person respects and observes divine and human law (v. 9). If this principle is kept, all others will result.
22. In the second example (vv. 10–13) the righteous man's son was the direct opposite of his father.
23. He indulged in all those unjust and evil things from which his father abstained. Should the wicked son go unpunished because he has a righteous father? The answer is an unqualified no (v. 13).
24. Example three is the case of the righteous man's grandson, the son of the wicked man.
25. He had compared his grandfather's life and the lifestyle of his father (v. 14) and chose to follow the example of his godly grandfather (cp. vv. 15–17 with vv. 6–9).
26. So the conclusion of the matter was, should a godly, righteous son assume the guilt of a wicked, ungodly father? The answer again was a resounding no (v. 17).
27. The question at issue in the three examples was restated and summarized in v. 19.
28. **18:21–24** A generation is not predetermined for judgment or for blessing by the previous one.
29. Even within a generation, or within an individual life, the past does not necessarily determine the present or the future.
30. Ezekiel again states that God honors true repentance and genuine faith. The person who truly repents is able to put the guilt of sin in the past (v. 22).
31. God erases it from one's record. God will forgive and receive anyone who turns to Him from sin in repentance and faith, regardless of past sins.
(Romans 5:6–11; Ephesians 2:1–8; Colossians 1:20–22; 2 Peter 3:9).

32. Verse 21 gives an excellent definition of true repentance based on faith. It involves two stages: first, a turning away from sin and second, a determination of loyal obedience to God.
33. God is not vindictive and takes no pleasure in bringing judgment on the wicked (v. 23). God is righteous yet loving, just yet merciful.
34. God responds to faith and repentance (18:21–23). When the wicked repent, He forgives. When the God-fearing repent, He forgives.
35. True repentance involves confession, sorrow for sin, desire for cleansing, and restoration. (Psalm 51:1–12)
36. **18:25–29** This section begins and ends with God’s response to charges of injustice.
37. Apparently the charges were based on the claim that Judah was innocent of wrongdoing but was paying for the sins of past generations.
38. They believed there was nothing, then, they could do about it. The people’s claim seems to be that God does not measure or examine His actions but acts arbitrarily.
39. Because God is just, His righteousness demands judgment for those who disobey His law. Therefore, when the righteous person abandons righteousness, judgment will be dispensed. (v. 24)
40. As often is the case, when the guilty person is exposed there is a tendency to blame God (v. 29) or others.
41. Ezekiel makes the point that there is no basis on which the guilty may fix blame on others but rather they must accept their own personal accountability to God (v. 29).
42. God’s dealings are always just and equitable; He gives ample, clear warning of the consequences of sin.
43. **18:30–32** Having firmly and eloquently made his case, Ezekiel stated his final proposition.
44. God desired to deliver, but he would bring judgment if necessary.
45. Verses 30–32 also contain a final call to Judah to cease their faithlessness, turn to God, and be delivered.
46. The message closes with the sad interrogative refrain, “Why will you die, O house of Israel?” God takes no pleasure in judgment, so “Repent and live!”