

Temptation

EZEKIEL'S WISDOM FOR DEALING WITH TEMPTATION

Focal Verses • EZEKIEL 18:1-9, 30-32

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: **EXAMINE** behavior in which we blame others as the cause; **COMMIT** to be responsible for our own behavior; and **ENGAGE** in responsible behavior that finds favor with God.

In Focus

As small children, Brandon and Bryce grew up watching their father come home drunk. He would often scream at them and their mom before heading to the bedroom to sleep off the alcohol. Brandon and Bryce witnessed their dad missing work because of his hangovers, only to return to drinking in the evening.

Their father came to faith in Jesus shortly before Brandon left for college. When Brandon left, Bryce was alone with his parents. Bryce resented his father. He prided himself on how he could drink responsibly. When Bryce left for college, he would drink with the guys to enjoy himself at a weekend party. It was hard living on his own. Soon, Bryce began treating himself to a nightcap, which turned to more and more drinking. Bryce was worried about what he saw his life becoming, but what could he do? For most of his life, he never had a positive role model to show him how to deal with life's hardships. Though his father had been delivered from alcoholism, Bryce realized he was now a borderline alcoholic. What had anyone really expected to happen?

Brandon watched sadly as his brother, Bryce, began following in the same footsteps as their father. Even though Brandon was the spitting image of his dad, they were very different in temperament. Knowing that he would likely have a problem with alcohol if he tried it, Brandon decided to abstain completely. He avoided every temptation related to alcohol. Brandon found that there were plenty of fun things to do with his friends that didn't involve drinks.

How have you followed in your parents' footsteps? When have you explicitly decided not to follow their example despite the temptation to repeat their actions?

Keep in Mind

“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” (Ezekiel 18:4, KJV)



Focal Verses

KJV 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?

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.

5 But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right,

6 And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman,

7 And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by

violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;

8 He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,

9 Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.

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.

The People, Places, and Times

House of Israel. This is a phrase used to address the Israelites. It is used throughout the Bible, primarily by the prophets such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos. The phrase is often referred to when the Lord through the prophets, begins to speak to Israel. The phrase is normally used as a way of gathering the Israelites' attention before speaking to them. Many examples in the Bible support this theory (Jeremiah 3:20; Ezekiel 33:11; Amos 5:25).

Proverb. A proverb is a short, wise saying used for a long time by many people. The proverbs and the lessons they taught were passed down from generation to generation. It was a condensed parable or fable that was sometimes presented to clearly teach a lesson. The proverbs of the Israelites and other people of the east were primarily "similitudes," which present their

wisdom as a pair of truisms that are similar to each other (e.g. Proverbs 26:11). Many proverbs are generally true, as opposed to absolutely consequential. Most are in this category of true (Proverbs 17:22), while others were false (Ezekiel 18:2). The main purpose of a proverb was to help families instruct to their young.

Many proverbs can be found throughout the Bible. The Book of Proverbs lists many wise saying of kings and powerful leaders. Most of these are short, compact statements that express truths about human behavior.

When have you seen a proverb play out in your life?

Background

The Prophet Ezekiel lived during the Babylonian exile and was active as a prophet for

approximately 20 years, from 593 BC to at least 573 BC. Ezekiel lived as an exile according to the title of the book that bares his name (Ezekiel 1:1-2), he was carried away as a captive with Jehoiachin (1:2; 2 Kings 24:14-16) in about 597 BC. His prophetic call came to him in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity (593 BC). Ezekiel held a prominent place among the exiles, and was frequently consulted by the elders (Ezekiel 8:1; 11:25; 14:1; 20:1). In the ninth year of his exile, he lost his wife by some sudden and unforeseen tragedy (8:1; 24:1, 18). According to the information in the book's opening, he was the son of the priest Buzi (1:3) and his name in Hebrew meant "God strengthens (this child)" or possibly, "May God strengthen (this person)." Because he was of a priestly family, he probably had a good education, especially in the Law, and his father may even have had some influence in Jerusalem. The time and manner of his death are unknown.

At-A-Glance

1. God Reminds Judah of His Sovereignty (Ezekiel 18:1-4)
2. God Reminds Them What is Righteous (vv. 5-9)
3. God Reminds Them of their Personal Responsibility (vv. 30-32)

In Depth

1. God Reminds Judah of His Sovereignty (Ezekiel 18:1-4)

The prophets had warned of God's judgment for generations. Because of that, the captives blamed their ancestors for their problems. They complained that God was punishing them for something their parents had done, quoting an old Jewish proverb, often used when a person was having trouble and it didn't seem like

he'd done anything to deserve it. They failed to realize they were even worse than their ancestors (Jeremiah 16:12). They remembered only the sins of the past, forgetting their sins of the present. Some White Americans tend to have a similar problem. They readily admit the past sin of slavery but protest that they had nothing to do with it. They complain about the demands of Blacks, forgetting their present injustice. God forbade Judah's complaining. First, He reminds them that He is God. He is in charge, and if the people were living in faith they would recognize His work. Even when people rebel, God is in charge of their souls. Second, He assures them that only those individuals who rebel against God will die. He is not unjust. Out of mercy, God waited for generations, looking for repentance. Finally, He had to send His judgment. Each individual soul is responsible for its own sin and will be judged accordingly.

Why do we often feel we are being punished for someone else's missteps?

2. God Reminds Them What is Righteous (vv. 5-9)

A person has a right to stand as an individual in God's hands. However, just because a person has this right doesn't mean all their problems are over. It means he's got to watch how he lives. It means he's got to stick to the standards. It means he's got to uphold the Law.

If you don't want to stand there with your knees wobbling, if you don't want to stand there with fear and trembling, you're going to have to do your bit to live in God's way. The greatest of the commandments is to love the Lord your God and to love your neighbor as yourself. The examples of the commandments we should keep (18:6-8), quite naturally, fit both categories: loving God and loving our neighbor. God never intended anything else.

How do you remind yourself what the right thing to do is?

3. God Reminds Them of Their Personal Responsibility (18:30–32)

God does not enjoy punishing the wicked. He sends punishment so the wicked will repent. When they do repent, He gives them life and hope. Repentance works in reverse too. The previously righteous man who turns to a wicked life opens himself to God's judgment.

God concluded His comments with a promise. If any wicked man would turn from his wicked ways his life would be saved. The choice was theirs. "Why do you want to die?" God cried. "Seek me and live!" (cf, Deuteronomy 30:19; Amos 5:4). Hinting at the coming Gospel of Jesus Christ, God promised a new heart and a new spirit to any who would live in faithful obedience to Him.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian has an even better opportunity to live righteously than the people of Judah during the time of Ezekiel. But modern Christians have the same problem that Ezekiel's hearers had. They have an attitude of self-righteousness, complaining about the sins of others without examining themselves.

Why do we not do the right thing, even after we are given good advice?

Search the Scriptures

1. Why did God say the old proverb should not be used? (Ezekiel 18:1–4)
2. What did God say the people of Judah needed? (v. 31)
3. Does God enjoy punishing people? (v. 32) Explain.

Discuss the Meaning

1. What does God do when you try to turn from your old ways, but keep slipping back?
2. God had described Himself as "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:7, KJV). Now He says individuals pay for their

sins, specifically saying the parents' sin does not lie on the child. Scripture tells us that God is unchanging (Hebrews 13:8). Why does God seem to be changing His methods? Was He not satisfied with the previous arrangement? Is He admitting that He had made a mistake? Explain.

Liberating Lesson

Many people are familiar with old superstitious sayings passed down through generations. These may include sayings such as: seven years of bad luck for breaking a mirror; you will go to jail if your foot is swept by a broom; you will have bad luck if a black cat crosses your path, or good luck if you eat blackeyed peas at the start of a new year.

If we live our lives according to these kinds of sayings, we not only keep ourselves in bondage, but we also keep generations of our descendants in bondage too. As children of God, we must realize that no superstition or old saying is more powerful than God. On the contrary, we must depend totally on God, because He holds our complete destiny in His hand.

Application for Activation

Think of problems in your life that you feel were caused by someone else. To what extent have you contributed to the problems yourself? What attitude should you have toward people who cause problems for you? What can you do to ease these problems?

Look at the problems you have caused yourself. What attitude does God want you to have toward these problems? What can you do to correct them?

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

Harrison, R.K. editor. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1988. 1046.
Strong, James. *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003.
Thayer, Joseph Henry. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. New York: American Book Company, 1996.
Vine, W.E. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996.

Say It Correctly

Jehoiachin. jeh-HOY-ah-kin.
Buzi. BOO-zee.

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 134

Nehemiah 12-13

Psalms 55:15-19

DAY 135

Esther 1-5

Psalms 55:20-23

DAY 136

Esther 6-10

Psalms 56:1-7

DAY 137

Job 1-4

Psalms 56:8-13

DAY 138

Job 5-7

Psalms 57:1-6

DAY 139

Job 8-10

Psalms 57:7-11

DAY 140

Job 11-13

Psalms 58:1-5

Notes
