

Personal Consequences of Sin

Key Verse: *“I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.”*
—**Ezekiel 18:32**

Selected Scripture:
Ezekiel 18

THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH

used a proverb that attempted to place the blame for their misdeeds upon their ancestors. God reproved them for attempting to avoid personal responsibility for their actions.—Ezek. 18:1-4

The Prophet Ezekiel in our lesson states that for one to be considered just under the Mosaic Law, they had to be of those who “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covered the naked with a garment; He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man.”—vss. 7,8

If someone had a son who acted wickedly, it would be the parent’s responsibility to discipline his offspring. (vss. 10-13) Eli, the high priest of Israel, failed to reprove his sons for their corrupt actions and immorality while serving as priests and, as a consequence, their lives were taken from them.—I Sam. 2:34

If an evil man had an upright son, the father would

die for his own iniquity, but the son would continue to live if he chose to do right. (Ezek. 18:14-18) Those who act wickedly and repent from their sins will live. (vss. 21-23) According to God's arrangements, this principle will be in force during Christ's future millennial kingdom. "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."—Jer. 31:34

During this present Gospel Age, believers who have received the Holy Spirit are considered righteous. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8:1) Any Christian who thereafter turns away from God and practices willful sin would be destroyed forever.—Ezek. 18:24

The people of Israel did not appreciate God's principles of righteousness and continued to accuse him of injustice because they felt his requirements for their conduct were unreasonable. God, therefore, criticized their false reasoning in attempting to justify their own sinful conduct. The Heavenly Father is merciful and has provided a way of redemption for all mankind through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus.—vss. 25-30; I Cor. 15:21,22

Our Key Verse emphasizes the fact that God does not purposely desire the destruction of individuals. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:16,17) The Heavenly Father is a God of love and compassion who has made ample provision for the salvation of all who desire to come into harmony with his righteous will. ■