

## Ezekiel 18 – A Proverb God Does Not Like

By Holly Effiom

VV1-4

What is God asking in this opening?

How do we react when we eat sour grapes today? What do we immediately experience?

What is meant by “...The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge”?

Do we have a similar saying for this concept?

Does God like this proverb? How do you know?

What bothers God about the proverb?

Would God cause the children to suffer for the sins of their fathers?

Is God against the use of proverbs? Eze 16:44

What does a proverb have to do with one’s soul?

LESSON: There are three take-aways from this section of scripture:

1. In Matthew 12:36, Jesus warns that “...every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” We now see that giving account for every “idle word” was not a new requirement. In this section of scripture, God is listening to the proverbs used by men, which alone makes a wise man pray as David did, for God to keep a watch over his mouth in (Ps 141:3).

Whenever I consider this prayer, I fall even more deeply in love with David’s heart, with his humanity – it calls to mind Ps 73:15 in which he ruefully confesses that he experienced a moment of envy for the prosperity of the wicked, and how they “... set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.” (Ps 73:9) Juxtaposed to David, who says, “... if I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.” (V15)

The wicked say whatever they want, but David feared offending a generation of children with every word he spoke.

2. God takes exception to this particular proverb because it is not true. Consider Job 42:7, in which God expresses displeasure with the words of Job’s false comforters because they “...have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.” When reading the comments of Job’s friends, they said a lot of good things about God, but they eventually expressed that Job must have done *something* wrong to warrant such suffering.

Job’s comforters did a couple of things wrong: a) there was a presumption that Job had done something to deserve the suffering he had received; and b) the timing of their comments only caused Job more pain. The facts of Job 1 and 2 refute the first point, and God’s character refutes the second.

3. The main reason that this particular proverb offends God is because it goes against His innate sense of justice, which He will make clear in the rest of this chapter. Each individual must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12).

VV5-9

What does God consider lawful and right according to the section of scripture?

What does it mean to have “...eaten on the mountains...”?

What commandment is associated with not defiling your neighbor’s wife?

What does it mean to go near a “menstruous” woman?

Where in the law are people directed not to oppress anyone?

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Does God honor those who break their word?

Does God consider it lawful and right to harm another person?

Is it expected that a child of God would feed the hungry and cover the naked?

What is usury?

Does God consider it lawful and right to charge interest on a debt?

Is it lawful and right to partake in iniquity?

Does God expect His children to judge fairly?

Does God expect His children to be true in all their interactions?

If you honor these laws are you walking in the law of God?

What do all of these lawful and right actions have in common? Matt 22:37-40

Will a man live if he acts in a lawful, right, and truthful manner?

**LESSON:** I believe that God, through Ezekiel, gives a quick summary of the Law of Moses in describing what He defines to be lawful and right. In examining each point, for example:

“...hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eye to the idols of the house of Israel, neither had defiled his neighbour’s wife...” encompasses 2 of the first 10 commandments in that one line. It is noteworthy that the lawful and right actions described by God all are related to either actions directed towards God or actions directed to one’s fellow man. This confirms Jesus’s words of Matt 22:37-40: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

VV10-13

What will happen to the one who has a son who is the exact opposite – not lawful and right?

What if this son goes against all the things God has deemed lawful and right – defiles his neighbor’s wife; been violent toward his fellow-man; oppresses the poor and needy; eats upon the mountains; breaks his vows – will he be permitted to live?

Who will be at fault for his death?

VV14-20

What about the case where a man has a son who learns from his father’s mistakes and chooses NOT to walk in that path? What will happen to him, according to this section of scripture?

Should this man die because his father was a sinner?

How do the children of Israel respond to this comment? Ex 20:5

How do the children of Israel choose to interpret the words of the Law?

What does God make clear about His Law in this section of scripture?

**LESSON:** This section of scripture amazes me – these people have the temerity to argue with God, and throw His own scriptures in His face! They are so like us... or rather, we are so like them!

When I look at Exodus 20:5, I remember that I, too, was of the mindset, in my approach to reading the Law, that all phraseology is a “thou shalt not...” In this section, God is telling you about His character – He is a jealous God, and those who despise wise counsel (His counsel) cause grief to their children, and generations of their children; and because *all* is God’s domain, ultimately, He is the one that permits it.

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With this wrong understanding, the children of Israel develop a skewed sense of justice, thereby offending God's sense of justice with their proverb – causing more harm than good. On some level, I would think that God would be offended by the fact that these people who *know* Him would think that He could be so *unjust*!

Do we do anything like this today? 1 Tim 2:10-15

VV21-24

What will happen to the wicked if they turn from their wickedness?

Will their wicked person who has turned from his wicked ways have to answer for errors of his past?

Is God overjoyed at the death of a wicked person?

What does give God pleasure, as it relates to a wicked person?

Does the righteous man who walks away from his righteousness and commits all manner of sin get to live?

Will the good things the “righteous-gone-bad” person did be remembered?

Will this person die in his sin without some kind of conversion?

VV25-32

What do the children accuse God of being?

What is God's response to that accusation?

What does God plead with these people to do? Why?

Is God pleased with the *opportunity* to judge these people?

LESSON: These men of Israel were so steeped in their own self-righteousness that they somehow were able to twist in their minds the justice of God – they thought that no matter what iniquities the righteous man commits that he remains *righteous*; and that a wicked man who turn from his wicked ways and does righteously remains unrighteous and should die. This is the skewed sense of justice of the proverb that causes generations of hurt to their own children that offended God.

Furthermore, these men of Israel have the nerve to *say*... and worse, *believe*... that God is *unfair*! These people missed that fact that their own behavior was what was under discussion – at no point did they liken their behavior to being “wicked”. This is the leadership of Israel. This is God Almighty *pleading* with these people to turn from their wicked ways so that He can extend mercy – so that they can live.

This section of scripture can be disheartening, but *my* heart is uplifted, not for Israel's sake so much as my own. God Almighty is allowing these people to argue with Him, to make their case... yes, it's a ridiculous case, but He hears them out, and *still* seeks an opportunity to extend mercy toward them.

This is the God I love; this is the God I worship. Amen!