

## MISUSED PROVERB [Ezekiel 18]

It's a common practice today for one to blame the past, one's parents, society, the environment, and circumstances for misfortunes. Accepting responsibility is not very popular. So it was in Ezekiel's time.

### BACKGROUND

Some of Judah had been taken captive to Babylon. Ezekiel was among the captives.

Their captivity was the result of God allowing it because of their sins. 6:9-10, 3:7-9

The captives found fault with their forefathers ... seeing themselves as innocent victims.

They believed they had found divine proof of their contentions in Exo.20:5: "visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate me."

Such thinking had blunted personal responsibility.

They confused two separate points:

#1: The consequences of one generation's evil will be suffered by next.

#2: Each person will bear punishment for own sins.

They concluded that it was unfair for them bear the punishment of their fathers.

### EZEKIEL PUTS THE PROVERB TO THE TEST

:4 soul that sins: dies [using the Law's death sentence as a reference to spiritual death]

:5 soul that is righteous: lives (:9b)

:10-13 sinful son of a righteous father: dies (but the father lives)

:14-18 righteous son of sinful father: lives (it's the father that dies)

:19-20 righteousness of righteous upon him; wickedness of wicked also.

:21-23 if wicked man turns: possible. (Herein is hope.)

:24 if righteous man turns away: it's possible. (Herein is a warning.)

:25-29 way of Lord is right; Israel's ways were wrong.

:30-32 Judgment based on personal conduct.

(Herein is the message: turn from sin and live.)

### LESSONS FROM THE TEXT

The consequences of sin are suffered by future generations.

Children suffer because of drunken father, or negligent mother.

Nations suffer because of past rulers' evil conduct.

Churches suffer because of past sins of members and or leaders.

But God will hold each person responsible for their own actions.

It is possible for those suffering consequences to turn.

Seeing oneself committing the sins of a father, a son can turn away.

Able offered proper sacrifice though his father sinned.

Enoch walked with God in contrast with contemporaries.

Noah found favor with God amidst sinful mankind.

Abraham left HIS idolatrous country.

If the wicked repent, they will live. 2Pe.3:9, 1Ti.2:4

It is possible for the righteous to turn away.

Seeing oneself following the righteousness of father, a son can turn away.

David's son Absalom.

Samuel's sons were evil. 1Sa.8:1-3

If the righteous turn away: they die. 1Co.9:27, He.10:26ff

### CONCLUSIONS

- While we may suffer effects of previous evil generations, it is possible to rise above it: By turning unto the way of the lord.
- While we may be affected by righteous of previous generations, it is possible to fall away.
- Judgment is individual. Each is held responsible for own actions.
- The Lord will not allow any proverb or saying to be twisted so that it relieves us of our personal responsibility.