

Breaking Family Sin Cycles

“Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:

Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and **recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them**: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name, Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”

Jeremiah 32:17-19

Preparatory Reading: Ezekiel 18; Ezekiel 33.

Introduction:

1. This sermon will review the *seriousness of sin*, for our holy God does not wink at sins of His people.
2. This sermon will review the *family consequences of sin*, for our holy God judges descendants for sin.
3. This sermon will review the *importance of righteousness*, for our holy God rewards righteous living.
4. This sermon will review the *role of consideration* – self-examination and repentance – for safety.
5. The Bible says to consider your ways (Hag 1:5). We must also consider ancestors’ ways (Eze 18:14).
6. Instead of going to a humanistic university to study social sciences, psychology, anthropology, and other hallucinations by descendants of monkeys, believe the authority, truth, and wisdom of scripture.
7. The role of ancestral sins has more impact on present morality, prosperity, and peace than their ideas.

The Doctrine Declared

- A. Wicked men accrue God’s curse on their children, which will surely be paid, all other things being equal (Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Lev 20:5; 26:39; Num 14:18,33; Deut 5:9; I Sam 15:2-3; II Sam 21:1-9; II Kgs 23:25-27; 24:3-4; Job 5:3-4; 21:17-21; Ps 37:28; 109:14; Isaiah 14:20-21; Jer 15:4; 32:17-19; Lam 5:7; Mat 24:34-36).
 1. An entire generation of the earth was drowned for the sins of the parents (Gen 6:1-13).
 2. Canaan and his descendants were judged perpetually for Ham’s sin (Genesis 9:24-27).
 3. Achan and his whole family were judged severely by Joshua for his sins (Josh 7:24-26).
 4. Korah and family were judged for his sinful presumption against Moses (Num 16:23-34).
 5. David and Bathsheba’s baby died for David’s sins of adultery and murder (II Sam 12:14).
 6. Consider Egypt. The once mighty nation is perpetually base by God’s judgment (Ezek 29:14-15).
 7. Jewish children were destroyed in Jerusalem, for the prior sins of adults (Luke 19:41-44).
- B. Why are 3rd and 4th generations mentioned? Because men often live to see them, which would be a terrible judgment to see their sins corrupting and troubling descendants that far.
 1. Benefits of righteous living and child training extend that far (Psalm 78:1-8; Joel 1:1-3).
 2. Ahaziah, and the generations cut out of Judah’s kings, are a good example of this rule.
 3. Wicked men may grieve for the evil consequences of their sins in descendants they see.
 4. Our nation has a proverb, The chickens will come home to roost. Here is the Bible proof.
- C. How is this rule of God’s judgment just? By several considerations for righteous men.
 1. It is perfectly just for all men are sinners, even infants, by representation, nature, and acts.
 2. It is perfectly just, for we see evil consequences of choices by parents, rulers, bosses, etc.
 3. It is perfectly just, for there is a degree of representation left in all men (Hebrews 7:9-10).
 4. If you dislike God’s judgment of the 3rd or 4th generation, what about 100+ (Ro 5:12-19)?
 5. The Bible has a rule for life, Be sure your sin will find you out (Num 32:23). Here it is.
 6. The Bible has a rule for life, Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap (Gal 6:7).

- D. Righteous men accrue God's blessing on their children, which will surely be paid by God's faithfulness, all other things being equal (Psalm 25:13; 37:26-28; 102:28; 112:2; Prov 11:21; 13:9; 20:7; Isaiah 58:12; Jeremiah 32:39; Acts 2:39).
 - 1. Consider the blessing on Phinehas for his righteousness (Num 25:11-13; Ps 106:30-31).
 - 2. God made an everlasting covenant with David in spite of foolish children (II Sam 23:5).
 - 3. God preserved a lamp, meaning descendants, in Jerusalem for His covenant with David (I Kings 11:12,36; 15:1-5; II Chron 21:7; Ps 132:17; Pr 13:9; 20:20).
 - 4. How much of a role did Hannah have in Samuel's life and Lois and Eunice in Timothy's?
- E. You can break a family cycle for good or evil, so guard a godly heritage and quit an evil one.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit makes the case very clear by numerous examples in Ezekiel 18 and 33.
 - 2. If a man with a godly heritage from parents lives foolishly, God will punish him anyway.
 - 3. A godly father is no safety for a foolish and rebellious child. Consider Samuel's sons, many of David's children, and Hezekiah's Manasseh ... all very wicked children.
 - 4. If a man with a wicked heritage lives wisely, God will reward him anyway, as Rahab.
- F. Repentance can deliver a single man or his family from coming judgment for others' sins.
 - 1. Even Ahab preserved himself from judgment by his repentance before God (I Kgs 21:29).
 - 2. God purposed to judge Judah for Manasseh's sins, but He spared Josiah (II Chron 34:28).
 - 3. God saved Rahab and her family, for her faith in protecting the spies (Josh 2:8-14; 6:25).
 - 4. This woman is an example of faith even in the New Testament (Heb 11:30-31; Jas 2:25).
 - 5. God loved her greatly; she was the great-great grandmother of King David (Ruth 4:21).
 - 6. God loved her so much that He even put her in the lineage of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5).
- G. Examine the detailed description of righteousness and wickedness in Ezekiel 18 in order to fully appreciate the practical and extensive of real righteousness (Ezekiel 18:5-18).
- H. Compare this doctrine to God's deliverance of us from Satan's family to be Christ's children.

The Texts Reconciled

- A. We do not take one text or related texts on any subject and ignore texts that modify the point, explain the point, or appear to counter the point.
 - 1. How can Exodus 20:5; 34:17; and related texts above declare that future generations can be punished for a father's sins, when Ezekiel 18 and 33 seem to declare the opposite?
 - 2. Exodus 20:5; 34:17; and related texts do not contradict Ezekiel 18 and 33, if we recall basic rules of Bible interpretation, as II Peter 1:20; II Tim 2:15; I Cor 2:13; and Neh 8:8.
- B. Neither do we question God foolishly or scornfully for what is plainly revealed, no matter how contrary it may be to our thoughts and our ways (Deut 29:29; Isaiah 55:8-9).
 - 1. First, let it be known you have no right to question it. "Nay but, O man ..." (Rom 9:20).
 - 2. God cannot and does not do unjustly, to anyone, ever (Gen 18:25; Deut 32:4; Hab 1:13).
- C. The issue here is not eternal damnation in the lake of fire, but God's chastening judgment, in spite of desperate efforts by Arminians to find any verse they can to scorn God's sovereignty.
- D. The reconciliation uses the following factors that divide these texts to avoid a contradiction.
 - 1. It is inspired wisdom that much work must be used to divide scripture (II Timothy 2:15).
 - 2. We must study the context of Ezekiel 18 to grasp the audience and their intentions by their wicked proverb to rightly understand God's response to it.
 - 3. It is devilish thinking that uses scripture to justify sin, as here (Ex 20:5 cp Ezek 18:19), which is just what the devil tried against Jesus Christ (Luke 4:9-12 cp Ps 91:11-12).
 - 4. Ezekiel's audience blamed their fathers for the threat rising from Babylon, as if they were innocent in righteousness. Compare the Jews' arrogance in Christ's day (Matt 23:29-38).

5. In fact, Ezekiel's audience was as guilty as their fathers, as God declares (Eze 18:30-31).
 6. Ezekiel's audience also fatalistically blamed God's unfair ways of punishing them for others' sins, which must be seen while considering the prophet's answer (Ezek 18:19).
 7. They used scripture (Ex 20:5) about as honestly as the devil (Luk 4:9-12 cp Ps 91:11-12).
 8. These scorers were blaming God's unequal ways for not righteously exonerating them.
 9. These scorers were being judged for their own sins, which God stated (Ezek 18:29-32).
 10. They perverted God's justice by ignoring their sin and lack of repentance (18:29-30).
 11. Righteous men, repenting from wickedness, are not judged as wicked men (18:25-28).
 12. "All other things being equal" is essential, for God's providence includes various factors.
 13. Every man shall bear his own burden, rather than blaming God, is the answer (Gal 6:5).
 14. Ezekiel 18 gives hope to any who will consider and repent for wickedness (Ezek 18:28).
 15. Ezekiel 18 does not deny, reject, or overthrow Exodus 20:5, but gives an escape from it!
- E. God has no revelatory pleasure in the death of the wicked, who refuse to repent and turn, though it may fulfill His secret will (see Deut 29:29). This is the same interpretation and sense we put on Jeremiah 7:30-31 and 32:35.
1. The statements that give some trouble are found in Ezekiel 18:32 and Ezekiel 33:11.
 2. Remember, these are His people, and the death is chastening for their sins, as His people.
 3. In spite of desperate and feeble efforts by Arminians, there is no eternal judgment here.
 4. This statement is little more than a parent saying, "This hurts me more than it hurts you," all the while thanking God they know of corporal punishment and the fruit it will bring.
 5. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, in light of the accusation of His injustice.
 6. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, in light of His reception on repentance.
 7. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked: He would rather see him repent and turn.
 8. God does have pleasure in the death of the wicked, when we know texts like Ex 9:16; Psalm 2:1-6; 115:3; 135:6; Prov 1:20-32; 16:4; Is 53:10; Rom 9:17,22; etc.
- F. Sometimes a family or nation will reach a point of guilt and sin, where a righteous man can only save his own soul, not those around him (Jer 15:1; Ezek 14:14; Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11).
- G. Sometimes a family or nation will reach a point of guilt and sin, where God will not hear their cries of repentance (Num 14:39-45; Pr 1:20-32; 29:1; Heb 12:16-17; Rev 2:20-23).
- H. Sometimes a family or nation will reach a point of guilt and sin, where God will righteously judge them by blinding them to truth that could save them (I Sam 2:25; Isaiah 6:9-12; Ezek 14:6-11; 20:24-26; Matt 13:10-17; John 12:37-41; Acts 28:25-28; II Thess 2:9-12).

The Doctrine Applied

- A. Your choices today affect not only your life, but also the lives of children and grandchildren.
1. Carnal Christians beget carnal Christians as much as big Buddhists beget little Buddhists.
 2. Good men live with an eye to at least four generations (Ps 78:1-8; Joel 1:1-3; Ex 20:5-6).
 3. They choose to set a godly heritage for future generations by their example to children, training of children, and God's supernatural blessing for their faithfulness upon children.
 4. Forget fuzzy, wuzzy feelings about family to focus on real righteousness and fruitbearing.
 5. God's grace is essential, but so are confession, repentance, reformation, and obedience.
 6. While you cannot guarantee your family's future, you can surely boost its probability of spiritual success and fruitbearing by your example, training, and accruing of God's favor.
 7. There is more than God's secret will affecting children; there is example and training.
 8. Whatever your family's cycle is in light of wickedness or worldliness, it can be broken!
- B. We should never consider conceiving a child, unless we are going to live a righteous life.

1. Why bring a child into the world with all its attendant labors, if we are going to live in such a way as to leave this world with a curse upon our offspring and their children.
2. Childbirth and child training are very important matters, and godly parents will conceive and birth children with great commitment and expectation of God's blessings on them.
- C. When you marry, you marry a family and its attendant sin line, which should be considered.
 1. If you marry into a wicked family, like Jehoshaphat's Jehoram did with distant cousin Athaliah, you bring God's judgment on your offspring, as three generations of Jehoram were cut out of the lineage of Jesus Christ (II Chron 18:1; 19:1-3; 21:5-6; Matt 1:8).
 2. However, you may marry into a wicked family tree, if the person you marry has broken the cycle by repentance as described in Ezekiel 18, like Rahab did (Matt 1:5).
- D. Adoption carries risks, for you are taking a child with a heritage and nature other than yours.
 1. Adoption involves more than just a different gene pool; it involves a different sin pool.
 2. God commanded the annihilation of Canaan's children, not their adoption by Israelites.
- E. The "consideration," or examination and analysis, of Ezekiel 18:14 and 18:28 is important.
 1. Self-examination is a very key part of a person's life that walks with God (Ps 139:23-24).
 2. You must consider your ways (Hag 1:5,7). You must consider your ancestors' ways.
- F. If you want to be a carnal Christian and hypocrite at home, then prepare for the judgment.
 1. If you criticize government in any sphere at any level, prepare for God's judgment of rebellious children or grandchildren and His sending calamities upon them (Pr 24:21-22).
 2. If you want to disrespect authority in your life of any kind, then prepare to endure such.
 3. If you want to be a spectator sports or hobby addict, then prepare for family judgment.
 4. If you neglect the public worship of God, your children will likely be belly worshippers.
- G. Examine and assess the family trees contributing to your children and react accordingly.
 1. If there has been drunkenness in your family's history, then be zealous about alcohol.
 2. If there has been financial foolishness in your family, then be a faithful and wise steward.
 3. If there is intellectual skepticism in your family, then be a man of faith in God's word.
 4. If there is rebellion and scorn against government, then be a Tory every day of your life.
 5. If there is carnal Christianity in your family, then be spiritually zealous to an extreme.
 6. If there is divorce and marital dysfunction in your family, then maximize your marriage.
- H. Full repentance includes repenting for sins of parents (Lev 26:40; Neh 9:1-3; Dan 9:3-19).
- I. Whatever your family's heritage is in light of wickedness or worldliness, it can be broken!

Conclusion:

1. We have focused attention on breaking a family cycle of sin, but we can build one of righteousness.
2. While Exodus 20:5 and related texts are frightening, Ezekiel 18 gives all the hope the righteous need.

For Further Study:

1. The Proverb Commentary, "Proverbs 20:7" ... http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/20_07.htm.
2. The Proverb Commentary, "Proverbs 13:9" ... http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/13_09.htm.
3. The sermon outline, "Family Planning," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/family-planning.pdf>.
4. The Bible study about Ahaziah's Age ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/bible/scripture/ahaziah-contradiction.pdf>.
5. The sermon, "Bear Your Own Burden," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/bear-your-own-burden.pdf>.