

# Digging Deeper

**Discipleship:** *God wants us to cling to Him alone.*

**Focus Question:** *Why does God carry out His punishments and blessings in this life?*

## **word of life**

**"For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live"**  
(Ezekiel 18:32).

Chapters 1–24 record God's judgments against Jerusalem and Israel. Ezekiel was probably one of the elites who had been deported to Babylon, and this sixth-century prophet anticipates the final destruction of Jerusalem, which marked the end of Judah and the puppet king Zedekiah. In chapter 18 the prophet lists many offenses which in his eyes merit the divine punishment exemplified in the kingdom's defeat.

Read Ezekiel 18:1-4.

There's a tendency in each of us to blame someone else for our troubles. Ezekiel's warning that Jerusalem would be punished because of the accumulated sins of the nation led the people to complain about being punished for the sins of others. They probably said it was all King Manasseh's fault. He had been notorious for his "detestable sins" (2 Kings 21:10-15).

The people accused God of being unfair. Behind their complaint was the idea they were not as guilty as their fathers had been and didn't deserve what was about to happen. By quoting the proverb they meant to say: "Our fathers sinned and the children have to suffer the consequences."

1. *Is Ezekiel asking for a direct answer to the question, "What do you mean?"*
2. *What is God's punishment for unrepentant sinners?*

Read 18:25-29.

It seems that no matter what God did, Ezekiel's fellow countrymen criticized Him as unjust for punishing them, for forgiving sinners, and for condemning the righteous man who turned away from the Lord.

3. *What are the people not seeing?*
4. *What is the cause of the people's spiritual blindness?*

Read 18:30-32.

The solution? "Repent!" God does not want people to be cut off from his blessings. He wants them to live. Human beings cannot get a new heart and spirit on his own. God is the only one who can supply this. Ezekiel had stated this before (11:19), and he will say it again (36:26). The call to repentance expresses the need to acknowledge and turn away from sin and to turn to God as the source of forgiveness.

5. *How is repentance possible?*
6. *How has God provided the means for a change of heart?*
7. *How does verse 32 point to Christ?*



## **word among us**

Christianity is not a movement, an organization, or an attitude. It is a relationship between God and an individual person based on Jesus Christ the Savior from sin. The individual responds to what the Lord gives him in Christ Jesus. He asks the Lord to help him live a life reflecting the righteousness that Jesus has given him. And so, the righteous man "lives," that is, he exists and will continue to do so under the blessings of God.

1. *What are some of the reasons people give for being Christian?*
2. *Why are you a Christian?*

To attempt to base our relationships with God on ourselves without Jesus is to tell God that we think Christ's work is neither necessary nor beneficial. Then our life is not an effort to express our loyalty to the Lord. Such a misguided life can take about any track it wants, but it is headed away from the Lord and his blessings. In the strong language of Scripture, that is death.

3. *What obstacles do you see in the world today that hinder the spread of the Gospel or keep people from knowing Jesus?*
4. *What things in my life threaten to pull me away from the Word of God??*

This chapter gives us a rich banquet of the gospel. Even when we think he is unfair for doing it, God still forgives. Our God, although just and willing to carry out his drastic threats and punishments, does not like doing it. He would much rather bless and give life.

5. *Do people think that God cares about the way they live? Why or why not?*
6. *Why is God making these threats and promises?*
7. *What is the will of God?*

### **Prayer**

Lord, keep us steadfast in Christ's righteousness, which has satisfied Your justice and has given us new lives. Amen.

## ***last word***

Read the "Confession and Absolution" from Sunday's *Divine Service*.  
Meditate on it to begin your daily prayer.

