

# Ezekiel 14:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves.

## Analysis

**Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters.** This verse concludes a divine decree about the limits of intercessory righteousness. The "three men" referenced in context (v. 14) are Noah, Daniel (likely the ancient Daniel of Ugaritic legend, predating the biblical prophet), and Job—exemplars of righteousness from different eras and contexts. The Hebrew phrase *chai ani* (חַי־אֲנִי, "as I live") is a solemn divine oath, the strongest possible affirmation.

The shocking declaration is that even if these supremely righteous individuals lived in Jerusalem during its judgment, they could deliver only themselves (*natsal nafshot*, נָצַל נַפְשׁוֹת)—not their children. This overturns the typical pattern where righteous parents provided protection for their households (Genesis 18:23-32, Joshua 2:12-13). The word *natsal* (נָצַל) means to snatch away, rescue, or deliver from danger.

This passage establishes crucial theological principles:

1. God judges individuals for their own sin (Ezekiel 18:20)
2. personal righteousness cannot transfer vicariously to others, except in Christ
3. there comes a point when communal guilt requires communal judgment
4. intercession has divinely-appointed limits.

Only Christ's righteousness can be credited to others (2 Corinthians 5:21), fulfilling what these righteous men could not—securing salvation for those who have no righteousness of their own.

## Historical Context

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Ezekiel prophesied to the Jewish exiles in Babylon during one of Israel's darkest periods (593-571 BCE). The exiles clung to false hope that Jerusalem would escape destruction, believing their city's sacred status and the presence of righteous individuals would guarantee divine protection. Ezekiel's message shattered these illusions.

The reference to Noah, Daniel, and Job would have resonated powerfully with Ezekiel's audience. Noah's righteousness saved his household from the flood (Genesis 6:9, 7:1). Job's intercessory sacrifices protected his children (Job 1:5). Daniel's faithfulness influenced Babylonian and Persian courts. These men represented the pinnacle of individual righteousness and effective intercession.

Yet God declared that even their presence could not avert Jerusalem's coming destruction (which occurred in 586 BCE). This reflected the accumulation of generations of idolatry, injustice, and covenant violation. The principle echoes God's word to Jeremiah that even Moses and Samuel's intercession could not prevent judgment (Jeremiah 15:1). The historical fulfillment came when Jerusalem fell, the temple was destroyed, and judgment fell on all inhabitants regardless of family connections to the righteous. This demonstrated that in the final analysis, each person stands before God individually accountable for their response to His covenant.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. What does this passage teach about the limits and appropriate expectations of intercession?
2. How does this verse challenge cultural assumptions about family legacy or inherited righteousness?
3. In what ways does this principle of individual accountability before God affect how we understand salvation?
4. How does Christ's vicarious righteousness differ from the inability of Noah, Daniel, and Job to save others?
5. What responsibility do righteous individuals have toward their communities, knowing their righteousness cannot save others?

## Interlinear Text

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וְשָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנָה	הָאֲנָשִׁים יָמִים	הָאֵלֶּה	בְּתוֹכָהּ	חַיִּי	אֲנִי	נֹאֵם
Though these three	H376	H428	were in it	as I live	H589	saith
H7969			H8432	H2416		H5002
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	לֹא יִשְׁלָחֵם	יִנְצֵלֵם	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל			
the Lord	GOD	H3808	but they only shall be delivered	neither sons		
H136	H3069		H5337	H1121		
וּבָנֵי	כִּי	הֵם	לִבְדָּם	יִנְצֵלֵם		
nor daughters	H3588	H1992	H905	but they only shall be delivered		
H1323				H5337		