

Ezekiel 14:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

Analysis

God declares: 'Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.' This stark declaration emphasizes that individual righteousness cannot save others when corporate judgment comes. The three named men represent exceptional piety—Noah (Genesis 6-9), Daniel (contemporary with Ezekiel, Daniel 1-6), and Job (Job 1-42)—yet even their righteousness would only save themselves.

The phrase 'neither son nor daughter' emphasizes that even parental righteousness cannot transfer to children under divine judgment. Each person stands individually accountable before God. While godly parenting influences children positively, it cannot substitute for personal faith. When judgment comes, family connections provide no protection apart from individual righteousness. This sobering truth challenges assumptions about inherited faith or proxy righteousness.

From a Reformed perspective, this verse illustrates that salvation is personal and non-transferable. Parents cannot save children; spouses cannot save each other; church membership doesn't guarantee individual salvation. While believers' children are in covenant community and receive covenant promises, they must personally exercise faith. Corporate covenant standing doesn't guarantee individual salvation—each must be individually regenerated, believing, and

justified. This challenges both presumption (assuming family faith suffices) and despair (thinking family sin determines destiny).

Historical Context

The historical context addresses exiles' assumptions that their relationship with faithful ancestors or contemporary righteous individuals might spare them from judgment. Some may have thought, 'We have Abraham as our father' (Luke 3:8) or relied on presence of faithful prophets to protect the nation. God demolishes such thinking—corporate judgment comes despite presence of righteous individuals who can only save themselves.

Noah's righteousness saved only his immediate family who joined him in faith (Genesis 7:1). Job's righteousness didn't prevent his children's deaths (Job 1:18-19). Daniel's righteousness didn't save Babylon from judgment or even protect his three friends from the furnace (though God preserved them through it, Daniel 3). The principle: personal righteousness saves personally, not corporately or by proxy.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does this verse challenge assumptions that family connections or church membership guarantee salvation?
2. What does the non-transferability of righteousness teach about personal accountability before God?
3. In what ways should godly parents balance confidence in covenant promises with recognition that children must personally believe?

Interlinear Text

וְנֹחַ	דָּנִיֵּאל	וְאִיּוֹב	בְּתוֹכָהּ	חַי	אֲנִי	נֹאֵם	אֲדֹנָי
Though Noah	Daniel	and Job	were in it	as I live	H589	saith	the Lord
H5146	H1840	H347	H8432	H2416		H5002	H136
הָאֵל	אֵם	בֶּן	אֵם	בֶּת	יִצְיָלוּ	הֵמָּה	
GOD	nor	neither son	nor	daughter	they shall but deliver	H1992	
H3069	H518	H1121	H518	H1323	H5337		
בְּצִדְקָתָם	יִצְיָלוּ	נַפְשָׁם:					
by their righteousness	they shall but deliver	their own souls					
H6666	H5337	H5315					

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 14:14 (Righteousness): Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.
