

Ezekiel 18:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.

Analysis

All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. This verse proclaims radical grace: when the wicked person genuinely repents and turns to righteousness, God completely forgives past sins. The phrase "shall not be mentioned" (lo yizakhru, לֹא יִזְכְּרוּ) means God will not remember, recount, or hold transgressions against the repentant sinner. This isn't divine amnesia but covenant mercy—God chooses not to count sins against those who turn to Him.

The Hebrew word for "transgressions" is pesha'av (פֶּשַׁעַיִם), denoting willful rebellion—not mere mistakes but deliberate covenant violations. Yet even these are forgiven upon genuine repentance. "In his righteousness that he hath done he shall live" (betsidkato asher asah yichyeh, בְּצִדְקָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה יִחְיֶה) promises life—both physical preservation and spiritual vitality—based on present righteousness, not past sin. The verb asah (עָשָׂה, "done/practiced") indicates sustained righteous living, not momentary reformation.

This principle confronts works-righteousness and fatalism simultaneously. Against works-righteousness: salvation depends on God's mercy, not accumulated merits. Against fatalism: past sin doesn't determine future destiny; repentance brings genuine transformation. The ultimate fulfillment appears in Christ, whose righteousness covers believers' transgressions (2 Corinthians 5:21). God doesn't

mention our sins because Christ bore them (Isaiah 53:5-6). We live not by our own righteousness but by faith in His (Philippians 3:9).

Historical Context

Ezekiel prophesied to Jewish exiles in Babylon from 593-571 BC, following Jerusalem's initial conquest (597 BC) but before the city's complete destruction (586 BC). Chapter 18 addresses a proverb circulating among the exiles: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2)—expressing fatalistic belief that they suffered for ancestors' sins, not their own actions.

This theology of inherited guilt contradicted covenant principles of individual responsibility. While corporate solidarity existed in Israel (Joshua 7), and generational consequences followed sin (Exodus 20:5), God also affirmed individual accountability (Deuteronomy 24:16). Ezekiel 18 systematically refutes fatalism: each person stands before God based on their own response to covenant obligations. The righteous live; the wicked die—unless the wicked repents (18:21-23) or the righteous apostatizes (18:24-26).

This teaching prepared exiles for restoration. They weren't doomed by Israel's historical sins; individual repentance opened the way to life and eventual return. Ezekiel's message confronted both despair ("we're hopelessly condemned") and presumption ("we're righteous by ancestry"). Post-exilic Judaism sometimes distorted these principles toward works-righteousness, which Jesus and Paul corrected by revealing that the righteousness enabling life comes through faith in Messiah, not legal observance (Romans 3:21-26).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise not to mention forgiven sins provide assurance to believers struggling with guilt?
2. What is the relationship between repentance, righteous living, and divine forgiveness in this passage?
3. How does individual responsibility before God balance with biblical teaching on corporate solidarity?
4. In what ways does this verse anticipate the gospel of justification by faith in Christ?
5. How can Christians avoid both fatalism ("my past determines my future") and presumption ("my past guarantees favor")?

Interlinear Text

כָּל	פְּשָׁעָיו	אֲשֶׁר	עָשָׂה	לֹא
H3605	All his transgressions	H834	that he hath committed	H3808
	H6588		H6213	
יִזְכָּר וְ	לֹא	בְצִדְקָתוֹ	אֲשֶׁר	
they shall not be mentioned	H0	unto him in his righteousness	H834	
	H2142		H6666	
עָשָׂה	יִחְיֶה:			
that he hath committed	he shall live			
H6213	H2421			

Additional Cross-References

Micah 7:19 (Sin): He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

Isaiah 43:25 (Sin): I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Ezekiel 33:16 (Sin): None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

Ezekiel 18:24 (Righteousness): But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

Hebrews 8:12 (Righteousness): For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Psalms 103:12 (Sin): As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Jeremiah 50:20 (Sin): In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

Romans 8:1 (Parallel theme): There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.