

Ezekiel 18:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Analysis

"Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" God commands what He also promises (11:19, 36:26)—a new heart. This paradox reflects both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. We cannot make ourselves new hearts, yet we must repent and believe. God commands the impossible to demonstrate need for grace, then provides what He demands. The question "why will ye die?" places responsibility on those who refuse despite clear warning and gracious offer.

Historical Context

The command (591 BC) to make new hearts seems contradictory since only God can regenerate. However, it emphasizes human responsibility to repent and believe. The imperative drives awareness of inability, creating dependence on grace. This shaped Reformed soteriology: commands reveal inability, demonstrating need for sovereign grace. God commands repentance, convicts of sin, and grants repentance—accomplishing through grace what law demands but cannot produce.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do commands to do what only God can do drive dependence on sovereign grace?
2. What is the relationship between divine initiative in regeneration and human responsibility to repent?

Interlinear Text

הִשָּׁל יָדְךָ	מִמַּעֲלִיֶּךָ	אֶת	כָּל	פְּשָׁעֶיֶכֶם	אֲשֶׁר
Cast away	H5921	H853	H3605	from you all your transgressions	H834
H7993				H6588	
פְּשָׁעֶיֶךָ	וַעֲשֵׂה	לְךָ	לֵב	חֵדָשׁ	רוּחַ
whereby ye have transgressed	H0	and make	H0	heart	and a new spirit
H6586		H6213		H3820	H2319 H7307
וְלִמָּה	תָּמָּה	בֵּית	יִשְׂרָאֵל:		
and a new	H4100	for why will ye die	O house of Israel		
H2319		H4191	H1004 H3478		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 51:10 (Spirit): Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Ezekiel 36:26 (Spirit): A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 11:19 (Spirit): And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

Romans 8:13 (Spirit): For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Romans 12:2 (Parallel theme): And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Ezekiel 33:11 (References Israel): Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Deuteronomy 30:19 (Sin): I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

1 Peter 2:1 (Parallel theme): Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

Isaiah 55:7 (Parallel theme): Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Ezekiel 20:7 (Parallel theme): Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.