

Ezekiel 33:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth.

Analysis

This passage emphasizes both the possibility and necessity of genuine repentance. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but desires they turn and live (Ezekiel 33:11). This reflects the Reformed understanding that while salvation is entirely by grace through faith, it necessarily involves repentance—turning from sin to God in trust and obedience. True conversion produces transformed living, not merely intellectual assent to doctrine. The call to repentance demonstrates God's mercy even amid judgment, offering escape to those who truly turn from rebellion. This principle refutes both presumption ("I'm elect, so my behavior doesn't matter") and despair ("I've sinned too much to be saved")—both errors Ezekiel's audience faced.

Historical Context

This passage was delivered during the Babylonian exile (c. 586-571 BCE) after Jerusalem's destruction. The exiled community grappled with theological and practical questions: Why had judgment come? Would restoration occur? How should they live in exile? The historical context of ancient Near Eastern covenant patterns, conquest and exile practices, and prophetic literature provides essential

background. Archaeological discoveries from this period illuminate the exile's realities and the return's historical fulfillment. Yet Ezekiel's prophecies extend beyond immediate historical context to find fuller realization in Christ and the church, with ultimate consummation in the new creation.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does this verse deepen your understanding of God's character, purposes, or ways of working in history?
2. What specific application does this passage call you to make in your current circumstances or spiritual life?
3. How does this Old Testament passage illuminate New Testament teaching about Christ, salvation, or the church?

Interlinear Text

וְאַתָּה	בְּנִי	אֶל	אָמֵן	רְאֵד	בְּנִי	בְּנִי
H859					H413	
Therefore thou son	of man	say			Therefore thou son	
H1121	H120	H559			H1121	
עַמְךָ	צִדְקָת	וְאַזְכֵּר	לֹא	לֹא	תִּצְלַל	כִּי
of thy people	The righteousness	neither shall the righteous			shall not deliver	
H5971	H6666	H6662			H5337	
בַּיּוֹם	פָּשָׁע	וְ	וְרַשְׁעַת			
for his righteousness in the day	of his transgression	as for the wickedness				
H3117	H6588	H7564				
לֹא	כְּרֹשֶׁע		בַּיּוֹם			
of the wicked	he shall not fall		בְּהַ			
H3808	H3782		H0			
			for his righteousness in the day			
H7563			H3117			
שׁוֹבֵעַ	מַרְשֵׁעַ	וְ	לֹא	לֹא	לֹא	בַּיּוֹם
that he turneth	from his wickedness	neither shall the righteous				
H7725	H7562	H6662				
			H3808			
וְ	צִדְקָת	וְ	בַּיּוֹם			
לִחיָה	בַּהֲ	בַּיּוֹם	בְּהַ	בְּהַ	בְּהַ	בְּהַ
to live	H0	for his righteousness in the day	that he sinneth			
H2421		H3117	H2398			

Additional Cross-References

2 Chronicles 7:14 (Sin): If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Romans 3:25 (Righteousness): Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

1 John 2:1 (Righteousness): My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

Ezekiel 33:2 (Parallel theme): Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:

Ezekiel 18:21 (Sin): But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

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