

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 הָ	בְּנִי	אֶל אָמֹר אֶדָּם	אֶל בְּנִי
H859	Therefore thou son	of man	Therefore thou son
	H1121	H120	H413 H1121
		say	
		H559	
עַמְּךָ	צִדִּיק תִּ	וְצַדִּיק יִקַּ	לֹא
of thy people	The righteousness	neither shall the righteous	H3808
H5971	H6666	H6662	shall not deliver
			H5337
בְּיוֹם	פְּשָׁעוֹ	וְרָשָׁע תִּ	
for his righteousness in the day	of his transgression	as for the wickedness	
H3117	H6588	H7564	
הָרָשָׁע	לֹא	יִכָּשֵׁל	בְּיוֹם
of the wicked	H3808	he shall not fall	for his righteousness in the day
H7563		H3782	H3117
שׁוּב וְ	מִרְשָׁעוֹ	וְצַדִּיק יִקַּ	לֹא
that he turneth	from his wickedness	neither shall the righteous	H3808
H7725	H7562	H6662	be able
			H3201
לְחַיֵּיתוֹ	בְּיוֹם	חַטָּאתוֹ:	
to live	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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