

Ezekiel 33:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

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

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

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

בָּאָמַר אָ	לְצִדְקָה	בְּתִי חַיִּים	בְּתִי חַיִּים	עַל
When I shall say	to the righteous	live	live	if he trust
H559	H6662	H2421	H2421	H5921
צִדְקָתָה	עַשׂ הַ	וּבְעִוָּל אָ	כָּל	צִדְקָתָה
all his righteousnesses	and commit	but for his iniquity	H3605	all his righteousnesses
H6666	H6213	H5766		H6666
לֹא	תִּזְכֵּר בְּנָה	וּבְעִוָּל אָ	בְּשַׁה	בְּ
H3808	shall not be remembered	but for his iniquity	H834	and commit
	H2142	H5766		H0
ימֹותָה				
he shall die				
	H4191			

Additional Cross-References

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 10:38 (Faith): Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Ezekiel 18:4 (Sin): Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Ezekiel 3:20 (Righteousness): Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

