

Ezekiel 33:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.

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

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

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

וּבָשׁ וּבִ	כָּשָׁע	מִרְשָׁעַת וְ	וְעָשׂ הַ	מִשְׁפָּט ט
turn	But if the wicked	from his wickedness	and do	that which is lawful
H7725	H7563	H7564	H6213	H4941
וְצִדִּיק הַ	עָלֶיהָ ׀	הָ וְאֵ	יִחְיֶה:	
and right			he shall live	
H6666	H5921	H1931	H2421	

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