

Jeremiah 31:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

Analysis

This verse explicitly states the principle implied in verse 29: individual accountability. 'Every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge'—the one who sins bears the consequences. This is basic justice: punishment falls on the guilty party. The Mosaic law established this principle (Deuteronomy 24:16), but the people had perverted it by claiming corporate guilt absolved individual responsibility.

This teaching establishes human dignity and moral agency. We are not mere products of our environment or victims of our ancestry. Each person is a moral agent capable of choice and therefore responsible for their choices. This grounds both condemnation (we are guilty for our own sin) and hope (we can choose to repent and believe). It also prevents fatalism—we are not doomed by our family history or trapped by circumstances beyond our control.

However, this principle must be balanced with the gospel truth that all have sinned (Romans 3:23) and deserve death. While we die for our own iniquity, we cannot save ourselves through moral improvement. We need a substitute who dies for our iniquity—Christ, the righteous for the unrighteous (1 Peter 3:18). Individual accountability for sin drives us to the cross, where Christ bore our sins in His body (1 Peter 2:24).

Historical Context

The Babylonian Talmud later developed extensive teaching on individual versus corporate responsibility, wrestling with how to understand God's justice. The exile forced Israel to confront these questions. How could God be just if innocent people suffered? The prophets' answer: there were no innocent people; all were guilty. Yet God in mercy would save a remnant not because they deserved it but because of His covenant faithfulness.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does individual accountability for sin both condemn us (all are guilty) and point us to Christ (we need a substitute)?
2. What is the relationship between personal responsibility and God's sovereignty—how do both remain true?
3. How should understanding that 'every one shall die for his own iniquity' affect how we view and treat others?

Interlinear Text

בָּאֵד	מִתְּמֻמָּה	כָּל	בָּאֵד	מִתְּמֻמָּה
בָּאֵד	מִתְּמֻמָּה	כָּל	בָּאֵד	מִתְּמֻמָּה
בָּאֵד	מִתְּמֻמָּה	כָּל	בָּאֵד	מִתְּמֻמָּה

בָּאֵד	מִתְּמֻמָּה	כָּל	בָּאֵד	מִתְּמֻמָּה
בָּאֵד	מִתְּמֻמָּה	כָּל	בָּאֵד	מִתְּמֻמָּה
בָּאֵד	מִתְּמֻמָּה	כָּל	בָּאֵד	מִתְּמֻמָּה

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 3:11 (Parallel theme): Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

Ezekiel 18:20 (Sin): The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Deuteronomy 24:16 (Sin): The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

Galatians 6:5 (Parallel theme): For every man shall bear his own burden.

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 33:18 (Sin): When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.