

WHOSE FAULT IS IT?

Ezekiel 15-19

“It’s not MY fault!”

“She hit me first!”

From Adam’s first sin to this morning’s spat on the way to church, people have become expert at blaming somebody else for their failures!

God asked Adam: “Did you eat the fruit?”

“It was that woman—SHE did it!”

“In fact YOU gave her to me!” “It must be GOD’s fault!”

We have become experts at blaming ANYBODY else for our troubles!

That’s what Israel is trying to do in Ezekiel 15-19

God makes very clear that “The buck stops here!”

We must assume responsibility for our own failure!

“What’s the underlying theme?”

Why have I chosen to consider the book of Ezekiel, NOW—at PVBC?

Let me try to clarify one more time for his sake—for ALL of us, why this book is so important to US!

Underlying theme: **Importance of seeing God, no matter what issue we’re facing**

—no matter which side of the fence we may be on!

We need to re-focus on HIM!

When we get used to having God around, and begin to take Him for granted, we need a renewed vision of Who He is!

That was the starting point of Israel’s problem in Ezekiel. People who have turned their back on Him (Israel), need to be reminded of Whom they’re playing games with.

People who remain faithful (Ezekiel) in the midst of a declining culture, need to be reminded of Whom we serve.

We're on the winning side!

We serve the glorious and holy God.

People who are going through hard times,
need to re-focus on Him.

He can handle this!

He makes no mistakes.

("We're not important enough that God should make His
first mistake in us!")

He will never leave us nor forsake us.

People who are being put to the test,
need to see Him as He is.

He won't lose the battle.

We can trust Him.

When we see Him as He is, we can hang in there!

He wants to use the test to show the world Who He
is—through us!

People who are considering giving their life to serve the Lord as
missionaries, need to focus on Him.

We will never follow Him, if we don't know Whom we serve

He is able to provide everything we need, if we just focus on
Him and trust Him.

**Wherever we may be in our spiritual development, we need
a renewed vision of God.**

We need to see Him as He is!

Ezekiel needed that. WE need that in our day too!

We need to know Who He is!

“They are going to find out WHO I AM!”

As Ezekiel writes these words, Israel’s rebellion against God continues.

They reject the warning of God’s messengers; judgment won’t effect *them*! Ezekiel warns them: God’s judgment is coming soon—on their generation!

[3 parables—illustrations from life—help them get the point.]

THREE PARABLES 15-17

1. PARABLE OF THE VINE 15 15:2-3, 6-8

Many kinds of trees are famous for their wood, their size, the curative benefits of their leaves, their fruit, or the amount of shade they produce.

But a **vine’s *only* value is the *fruit* it produces!**

Its “wood” is worthless

Its leaves don’t do anything.

You plant vines for their fruit. Period.

A FRUITLESS VINE IS totally USELESS!

It’s good for nothing!

When we lived in Guatemala, we used to compare the vine to **corn stalks**.

The only thing they’re good for is producing corn.

You don’t make anything of lasting value from the stalk.

When we lived in Arizona, we could use a **Cactus?**

Only thing *useful* is ***its fruit***?

— **God planted Israel as a vine to bear fruit.**

His plan: that they should be a light in midst of pagan nations

They acted worse than their neighbors.

Their claim to be God's people made Him a laughing stock.

Since they have not produced fruit, they are worthless.

— Therefore, God is going to cut it down and use it as fuel for a fire.

**God expects His people
to be productive people.**

2. PARABLE OF ISRAEL'S MARRIAGE 16 16:3, 4-6, 9-11, 13-14

Israel was like an abandoned child —like a newborn baby tossed in a dumpster!

God found her, cleaned her up, raised her to marriageable age.

— **God gave Israel everything she needed, **because**
He loves her!**

He took responsibility for her, married her, raised her to royal state. 16:15

God made her beautiful => then she became proud of her beauty.

After all He did for her, she became a prostitute

Israel has been unfaithful to the One Who loves her!

She loved for men to tell her how beautiful she was.

So she became dependent on them,

rather than the One Who made her beautiful!

She turned to everyone but Him!

God called them out of the pagan nations to be different, but instead, they imitated the pagans—even did worse than they were doing! **16:47-48**

God must judge her for her unfaithfulness.

.He would use the nations she made alliances with, to punish her
Then He will re-establish His marriage covenant with her, because He still loves her. **59-60**

— **God will take back His people, because He still loves them.**

God provides everything His people need.

God expects His people to be faithful to Him.

3. PARABLE OF TWO EAGLES 17 **17:3-8, 11-15, 16**

Israel is like a cedar whose high twigs (=royal house) were taken by an eagle (=Babylon) who protected and cared for them.

Then their king tried to make an alliance with a second eagle (=Egypt).

Israel is no more faithful to her *human* commitments than she is to her *God*.

Israel is unfaithful to ALL her commitments!

— **NO ONE can trust her!**

Because of Israel's *political* unfaithfulness, the king of Babylon will destroy them and kill their king.

This is just a *symptom* of their basic problem with God —they are unfaithful to their commitments.

Babylonian judgment is *God's* judgment *because of their unfaithfulness to Him*. **19-21**

Nevertheless, **God is ALWAYS faithful to His people!**

God will preserve the highest twig, which He will later restore. **22-23**

PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE DEALING 18 18:2-4

God responds to popular parable circulating through land:

**“THE FATHERS HAVE EATEN SOUR GRAPES
AND THE CHILDREN’S TEETH ARE SET ON EDGE!”**

It’s meaning: => God is judging children for their parents’ sins.

They don’t recognize the extent of their own sin and rebellion.

They accuse GOD of injustice: *“The way of the Lord isn’t just!”*

“We don’t deserve this!” “It’s not OUR fault!” “

We’re not to blame!”

**God’s principle: “The sinner will die for his own sin
and the righteous will live.” 18:19-21**

No one is judged for his father’s sin.

No one will escape because of his father’s righteousness.

Everyone is rewarded/repaid according to *their own* conduct.

Modern society has fallen into this pattern too. => *Everybody’s somebody’s victim!*

“I’m not responsible for my failure! Somebody else made me do it!

It’s because of my poor upbringing!

Life has treated me badly!

My parents abused me!”

That kind of excuse may work as a copout before other people.

But it won't cut it when you stand before God.

God *is* sympathetic to our pain! He understands that!

But *God holds US accountable for OUR OWN actions.*

We're responsible. We can turn our life around.

We can live a godly life, no matter how ungodly our dad may have been! It's our choice!

God holds US accountable for the choices WE make!

That same principle is true when it comes to trusting Christ!

Your dad's faith won't save you (nor will his skepticism condemn you!)

Your mom's faith won't save you!

Your wife's faith won't save you!

Each of us is responsible before God for our own choices.

Each of us must trust Christ for ourself.

Based on this principle God urges them to repent.

29-32

God gives them another chance to turn from their sin.

The passage declares: *"The soul that sins will die!"*

While it's true *"the wages of sin is death"*—in the ultimate, eternal sense—that's not his point here.

If this is a message about salvation, *no one* makes it!

For *"all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."*

Salvation has *ALWAYS* been by faith alone; not by works.

The only way anyone ever comes to God is by faith in Christ!

That's not the issue in this passage.

Ezekiel is talking about God's physical judgment on Israel.

They are being taken captive and will die in captivity.

They claim God is judging them for their parents' sin.
 God says His judgment is coming directly on those who sin.
 If you rebel against me, *YOU* will die!

The person who does wrong dies—*physical death!*
 N.T.: God still deals with family that way —rebellious sinners
still die!

LAMENT FOR PRINCES 19

Judgment is coming against their kings because of
their sin.

They are carried off into captivity and die there.
 Ezekiel laments each loss.

CONCLUSION

God chose Israel as His people to produce fruit and glorify Him.
 Instead of living distinctive lifestyle—that glorifies God, they try
 to imitate the pagans.

They want to be like everybody else.

When Israel fails to fulfill its mission, God judges them.

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE SAY TO THE CHURCH IN OUR DAY?

Why does God leave church in the world?

Do we have a mission to accomplish?

God placed us in the world to produce fruit through us.

Cromwell's time, in Britain: Government needed silver and
 supplies were running low.

Cromwell sent his men looking for silver.

They came back, reporting that the only silver they could

find was in cathedrals, in statues of the saints.

“Good! Let’s melt down the saints and put *them* in circulation!”

That’s what God wants to do with His people.

He wants us “*in circulation!*”—to reveal His character to those around us.

Just as He placed Israel in the world to bear fruit.

He wants us to be a light in midst of culture that walks in darkness.

Are people attracted to God because they see our godly lifestyle, or do they laugh at God because of what they see in us?

What might WE expect if we fail to fulfill OUR mission in the world? Have WE become an unfruitful people? a worthless vine?

Israel failed because they got their eyes on themselves.

They became impressed with their own greatness.

They forgot what God had taken them out of!

They forgot that GOD made them what they are.

Israel needed a renewed vision of God.

They needed a reminder of HIS greatness and glory.

So they might become fruitful again!

Do WE need a fresh vision of God’s greatness and glory?

WE sometimes need that reminder too.

We become impressed with our own importance.

We begin to think we’re pretty significant.

We forget what God has changed us from.

We forget that GOD made us what we are.

We need a fresh vision of God's greatness and glory!

That WE might become conformed to HIS image!

What changes does God want to produce in us?

=> Change My Heart, O God