

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Ezekiel Chapter 17-18

12/23/15

Ezekiel Chapter 17

Two Eagles and a Vine - Verses 1-10

¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²"Son of man, set forth an allegory and tell it to the Israelites as a parable. ³Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: A great eagle with powerful wings, long feathers and full plumage of varied colors came to Lebanon. Taking hold of the top of a cedar, ⁴he broke off its topmost shoot and carried it away to a land of merchants, where he planted it in a city of traders. ⁵"He took one of the seedlings of the land and put it in fertile soil. He planted it like a willow by abundant water, ⁶and it sprouted and became a low, spreading vine. Its branches turned toward him, but its roots remained under it. So it became a vine and produced branches and put out leafy boughs. ⁷"But there was another great eagle with powerful wings and full plumage. The vine now sent out its roots toward him from the plot where it was planted and stretched out its branches to him for water.⁸ It had been planted in good soil by abundant water so that it would produce branches, bear fruit and become a splendid vine.'⁹ Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Will it thrive? Will it not be uprooted and stripped of its fruit so that it withers? All its new growth will wither. It will not take a strong arm or many people to pull it up by the roots. ¹⁰It has been planted, but will it thrive? Will it not wither completely when the east wind strikes it—wither away in the plot where it grew?'"

17:1 The first eagle in this chapter represents King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (see 17:12), who appointed or "planted" Zedekiah as king in Jerusalem. Zedekiah rebelled against this arrangement and tried to ally with Egypt, the second eagle, to battle against Babylon. This took place while Ezekiel, miles away in Babylon, was describing these events (explained in verses 10-21). Jeremiah, a prophet in Judah, was also warning Zedekiah not to form this alliance (Jeremiah 2:36-37). Although many miles apart, the prophets had the same message because both spoke for God. God still directs his chosen spokespeople to speak his truth all around the world.

17:10 This east wind was the hot, dry wind blowing off the desert, a wind that could wither a flourishing crop. The hot wind of Nebuchadnezzar's armies was about to overcome the nation of Judah.

Verses 11-24 ¹¹ Then the word of the LORD came to me: ¹² "Say to this rebellious people, 'Do you not know what these things mean?' Say to them: 'The king of Babylon went to Jerusalem and carried off her king and her nobles, bringing them back with him to Babylon. ¹³ Then he took a member of the royal family and made a treaty with him, putting him under oath. He also carried away the leading men of the land, ¹⁴ so that the kingdom would be brought low, unable to rise again, surviving only by keeping his treaty. ¹⁵ But the king rebelled against him by sending his envoys to Egypt to get horses and a large army. Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Will he break the treaty and yet escape? ¹⁶ "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, he shall die in Babylon, in the land of the king who put him on the throne, whose oath he despised and whose treaty he broke. ¹⁷ Pharaoh with his mighty army and great horde will be of no help to him in war, when ramps are built and siege works erected to destroy many

lives. ¹⁸ He despised the oath by breaking the covenant. Because he had given his hand in pledge and yet did all these things, he shall not escape. ¹⁹ "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: As surely as I live, I will repay him for despising my oath and breaking my covenant. ²⁰ I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare. I will bring him to Babylon and execute judgment on him there because he was unfaithful to me. ²¹ All his choice troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors will be scattered to the winds. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken. ²² "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³ On the cedar mountain heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches. ²⁴ All the trees of the forest will know that I the LORD bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. "I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it."

17:22-23 Ezekiel's prophecy of judgment ends in hope. When the people put their hope in foreign alliances, they were disappointed. Only God could give them true hope. God said he would plant a tender sprig, the Messiah, whose kingdom would grow and become a shelter for all who come to him (see Isaiah 11:1-5). This prophecy was fulfilled at the coming of Jesus Christ.

Ezekiel Chapter 18

The One Who Sins Will Die - Verses 1-18

¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²"What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: "The parents eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? ³"As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. ⁴For everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child—both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die. ⁵"Suppose there is a righteous man who does what is just and right. ⁶He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor's wife or have sexual relations with a woman during her period. ⁷He does not oppress anyone, but returns what he took in pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. ⁸He does not lend to them at interest or take a profit from them. He withholds his hand from doing wrong and judges fairly between two parties. ⁹He follows my decrees and faithfully keeps my laws. That man is righteous; he will surely live, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁰"Suppose he has a violent son, who sheds blood or does any of these other things^[a] ¹¹(though the father has done none of them): "He eats at the mountain shrines. He defiles his neighbor's wife. ¹²He oppresses the poor and needy. He commits robbery. He does not return what he took in pledge. He looks to the idols. He does detestable things. ¹³He lends at interest and takes a profit. Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he is to be put to death; his blood will be on his own head. ¹⁴"But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things: ¹⁵"He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor's wife. ¹⁶He does not oppress anyone or require a pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. ¹⁷He withholds his hand from mistreating the poor and takes no interest or profit from them. He keeps my laws and follows my decrees. He will not die for his father's sin; he will surely live. ¹⁸But his father will die for his own sin, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother and did what was wrong among his people.

18:1 The people of Judah believed they were being punished for the sins of their ancestors, not their own. They thought this way because this was the teaching of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:5). Instead, Ezekiel taught that the destruction of Jerusalem was due to the spiritual decay in previous generations. But this belief in the corporate life of Israel led to fatalism and irresponsibility. So Ezekiel gave God's new policy for this new land because the people had misconstrued the old one. God judges each person individually. Although we often suffer from the effects of sins committed by those who came before us, God does not punish us for someone else's sins, and we can't use their mistakes as an excuse for our sins. Each person is accountable to God for his or her actions. In addition, some people of Judah used the corporate umbrella of God's blessing as an excuse for disobeying God. They thought that because of their righteous ancestors (18:5-9), they would live. God told them that they would not; they were the evil children of righteous parents and, as such, would die (18:10-13). If, however, anyone returned to God, that person would live (18:14-18).

18:8 The law of Moses had rules about charging interest (Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:36; Deuteronomy 23:19-20) to prevent God's people from taking advantage of the poor among them.

18:12 Returning what one took in "pledge" refers to the lender letting the debtor use whatever they had pledged as collateral for the loan (often a cloak). Without the cloak, the debtor would be cold at night. (See Exodus 22:26 and Deuteronomy 24:10-13 for the giving of this law.)

Verses 19-32

¹⁹ "Yet you ask, 'Why does the son not share the guilt of his father?' Since the son has done what is just and right and has been careful to keep all my decrees, he will surely live. ²⁰ The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them. ²¹ "But if a wicked person turns away from all the sins they have committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, that person will surely live; they will not die. ²² None of the offenses they have committed will be remembered against them. Because of the righteous things they have done, they will live. ²³ Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? ²⁴ "But if a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked person does, will they live? None of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness they are guilty of and because of the sins they have committed, they will die. ²⁵ "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Hear, you Israelites: Is my way unjust? Is it not your ways that are unjust? ²⁶ If a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin, they will die for it; because of the sin they have committed they will die. ²⁷ But if a wicked person turns away from the wickedness they have committed and does what is just and right, they will save their life. ²⁸ Because they consider all the offenses they have committed and turn away from them, that person will surely live; they will not die. ²⁹ Yet the Israelites say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Are my ways unjust, people of Israel? Is it not your ways that are unjust? ³⁰ "Therefore, you Israelites, I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. ³¹ Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel? ³² For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!

18:23 God is perfect love, but he also dispenses perfect justice. His perfect love causes him to be merciful to those who recognize their sin and turn back to him, but he cannot overlook those who willfully sin. Wicked people die both physically and spiritually. God takes no joy in their deaths; he would prefer that they turn to him and have eternal life. Likewise, we should not rejoice in the misfortunes of nonbelievers. Instead, we should do all in our power to bring them to faith.

18:25 A typical childish response to punishment is to say, "That isn't fair!" In reality, God is fair, but we have broken the rules. It is not God who must live up to our ideas of fairness; instead, we must live up to his. Don't spend your time looking for the loopholes in God's law. Instead, live up to God's standards.

18:30-32 Ezekiel's solution to the problem of inherited guilt is for each person to have a changed life. This is God's work in us and not something we can do for ourselves. The Holy Spirit does it (Psalm 51:10-12). If we renounce our life's direction of sin and rebellion and turn to God, he will give us a new direction, a new love, and a new power to change. You can begin by faith, trusting in God's power to change your heart and mind. Then determine to live each day with him in control (Ephesians 4:22-24).