

- God helps those who help themselves.
 - God works in mysterious ways
 - Spare the rod, spoil the child.
 - Cleanliness is next to godliness.
 - Moderation in all things.
 - A fool & his money are soon parted.
 - This too shall pass.
 - Charity begins at home.
 - To thine own self be true.
1. Lots of people believe these sayings are in the Bible.
 - a. They're surprised to find they're **not**, & think they **should be**.
 - b. After all, they've been quoted for ages & have passed into the body of collected wisdom.
 2. People love coming up with & passing on such sayings & clichés.
 3. They help us get a handle on life.
 4. Hey—Life is **messy**! It can get **ultra-complicated**.
 - a. It requires a lot of skill & wisdom to live well & find success.
 - b. Truth be told, it requires **walking in fellowship with God ...**
 - 1) The source of strength & wisdom.
 - 2) This is what it means to “**walk in the Spirit**.”
 - c. But—most people **don't**. So they take shortcuts to make things easier.
 - d. They try to clean up the messiness & complexity of life by making up cute sayings that sort everything out into neat little **categories**.
 - e. Everything gets a **label**, a **tag** to identify it so they know where to file it, then how to deal with it.
 - f. It's life reduced to a formula.
 - g. And for most of the time & the things they face, it works.
 - h. But eventually, something comes along that blows everything up.
 - 1) It doesn't fit in a category.
 - 2) There's no clever cliché that tells them what to do.
 - 3) And they're reminded yet again, how messy & complicated life really is.
 - a) A relationship goes haywire.
 - b) Their job ends.
 - c) Long held plans blow up.
 - d) They have major financial problems.
 - e) Their health breaks down.
 - 4) And all of a sudden, they realize there's no category to put this in; no label to stick on it.
 - 5) They don't know what to do and no cute sayings advise them.
 5. God allows these messes into our lives to remind us of our need of Him & our very real dependence on Him.
 6. Throughout history it's been those messy interruptions that have led people to Faith in Christ.
 7. When their self-sufficiency is shattered, they realize their need of God.
 8. But, people go on making up clichés, distilling the essence of what to do when faced with a challenge.
 9. As it is today, so it was in ancient Israel. We see one of their clever sayings here.

Vs. 1-4

¹ The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, ² “What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children’s teeth are set on edge’?”

1. This is the 2nd time God asked Ezekiel about a popular saying being bandied round.
2. We looked at the first last week in ch. 12.
3. Here the people used a clever little proverb for why they were having a hard time. And they were . . .
 - a. The Kingdom of Judah was a mere vassal to Babylon.

- b. Their king & thousands of wealthy Jewish hostages had been taken captive to Babylon & lived in a kind of relocation camp.
 - c. It was those exiles Ezekiel lived among & was a prophet to.
 - d. Because of the massive annual tribute the people of Judah had to send to Babylon each year, their economy was a wreck.
 - e. Because they'd forsaken God to worship idols, socially things were downright scary!
 - 1) Crime & violence filled the streets.
 - 2) Corruption infected every level of society, from head to toe; from the courts to the temple.
4. So—Here was their explanation for why things were a mess –
‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children’s teeth are set on edge’
- a. Our ancestors messed up & left us holding the bag.
 - b. They partied but we’ve got the hang over.
 - c. They ate the Chipotle bean burrito and we’ve got the heartburn.
 - d. They pigged out on broccoli, we’ve got the . . . > You get the idea.
5. Hey—the Jews of the 6th C. BC aren’t the only ones who use this saying, are they?
- a. People today still use this to explain why things are a mess.
 - b. Today’s psycho-therapeutic victim industry holds this as one of their primary diagnoses for why people are messed up.
 - 1) It’s your **mother’s** fault for the way you are.
 - 2) It’s your **father’s** fault you’re a wreck & your life is a mess.
 - 3) It’s your **parents**.
 - 4) It’s **heredity**; it’s your genes!
 - a) You’re doomed because DNA from your ancestors recombined to make you.
 - b) And you’re now locked into the chemistry of your cells.
- ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children’s teeth are set on edge’
6. They embraced fatalism. “We’re suffering for the sins of our ancestors AND THERE’S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT.”
7. Like so many of the clichés that people cling to, they thought it was Biblical.
- a. This was a twisting / distortion of Exodus 20:5
I, the Lord your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me,
 - b. They said, “See? Our ancestors worshipped idols. God’s judging us for **their** sin.”
 - c. What they **neglected**, which is always the case of cliché theology, is to KEEP READING. V. 6 says
but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.
 - d. God said in v. 5, He would judge **those who hate Him & repeat** the sins of their ancestors; making them their own sins.
 - e. But! Any generation that repents & turns to Him, He showers mercy, NOT judgment on!
8. God judged Jerusalem not because of the sins of previous generations.
- a. He judged it because they people on whom the judgment fell did the same wicked things their ancestors had done.
 - b. They weren’t innocent victims. They were willing participants in a long running rebellion against God.
9. Now, let’s be clear. The example of their wicked ancestors **did** influence them.
- a. But that influence was countered message of true prophets like Jeremiah & Ezekiel.
 - b. They were not without a witness to the truth & the way they ought to go.
 - c. They heard the Word of God but rejected it.
 - d. Parents are important. Our upbringing exerts a huge influence on us.
 - e. But know this: Just as big an influence is the Word & Spirit of God.
10. Look at v. 3 -
- ³ “As I live,” says the Lord God, “you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. ⁴ “Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.
- a. We get our biology from our parents.

- b. But our soul, the real me/ you; that immaterial reality that's the eternal you comes from & belongs to God.
 - c. And God declares here His judgment of a soul isn't based on anything other than who & what *that* soul is.
11. The actions of others can & do effect us. But each of us still choose to what degree we're going to let that effect influence us; much—or none at all.
12. The people of Jerusalem were being judged for what THEY did, not for what their ancestors did.
13. IF they'd repented & returned to God, everything would have changed.
14. Our nation / this society / our time is reaping the bitter fruit of previous generations of bad choices.
- a. We've sown the wind & now reap the whirlwind.
 - b. But let's be clear, when judgment falls, it will be because WE Cling to & repeat the error of our fathers.
 - 1) Our economy is a mess,
 - 2) Our streets are filled with violence,
 - 3) Our institutions are corrupt from top to bottom,
 - 4) Our homes are a disaster,
 - 5) Our schools are battle zones.
 - c. Because we're tramping in the same foolish, godless footsteps as the last few generations.
 - d. If we stepped out of our head-long dash in secular humanism & turned to God, He'd step in and deliver us.
 - e. It's called *Revival* & God's brought is many times when people repent and turn to Him.
 - f. BUT, & here's what Israel teaches us: If we don't, when we go on doing the same foolishness as our ancestors, we march straight into judgment.
15. Let's turn this from society at large & make it *personal / individual*; because that's what God does in the rest of the ch.

⁴ “Behold, all souls are Mine;

- a. By right of creation – we belong to God.
- b. And for Christians, this is *doubly* true because of the Cross.

1 Cor 6:20 • You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Pet 1:18–19 • You weren't redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ.

Vs. 5-29

1. Friends, this is WHY God **IS** the Judge & *gets* to judge – because by absolute right, we *belong* to Him!
 - a. We were created *by & for* Him.
 - b. And what God wants us to know is that His evaluation of us – is of US!
 - c. Not other's impact or influence on us.
2. So in *vs. 5-9*, He says the righteous person will live.
3. Then in *vs. 10-13* He says if that righteous man has a wicked son – Pop's righteousness won't cover him. The son will die.
4. In *vs. 14-17* the wicked son also has a son who sees the foolishness of his dad & decides to not follow in his footsteps. He'll not be judged for his wicked dad's deed. He'll live because like his grandpa, he's right with God.

5. **V. 20**

²⁰ The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

- a. Each of us stands before God based on who & what we are; not what someone else has done.

6. In *vs. 21-23*, God says if a man *starts out wicked* but repents & turns to God, he'll be forgiven.

7. But, the flip side in v. 24 says if a guys starts out well, then turns FROM God, he comes under judgment.

Vs. 30-32

1. Let's go to v. 30 pull all this together.

³⁰ “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,” says the Lord God. “Repent,

and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?³² For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”

2. Here’s how to make sure we escape the judgment of God. >> V. 31 –

Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed,

a. In a word REPENT

and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.

b. How do we **get** a new heart & spirit?

c. This is what Jesus does. HE gives us a new heart & spirit. He makes us new.

2 Cor 5:17 • If anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

3. When we repent of our sin and turn to faith in Jesus, God stands between us and our sin, between us and our past.

4. He makes all things new.

5. Now, we hear that & know it’s true but wonder, “If I’m new, why does it seem there’s so much of the old still hanging on?”

6. Let me use an illustration I think will help. The Ole Junker versus the Brand New Tricked-out Ride.

a. **Junker** Push start so park on hill, brakes bad so wheel into curb.

Broken seat – sit at angle

Alignment pulls to left

Overheats so no drive over 20 miles

Hit dash to make radio work

b. **Brand New Tricked-out Ride** oodles accessories take a while to learn and enjoy.

7. That’s us in Christ!

a. The old us died & is gone. There’s a new us w/amazing potential.

b. As we walk in the Spirit, we realize old habits don’t apply & in fact keep us from enjoying the new person we are.

c. As time goes by IN THE SPIRIT, we learn all the potential of who we really are now.

d. Our identity isn’t what our ancestors or past handed us: It’s who we are IN CHRIST!

8. For the non-Christian . . .

a. Yeah – You ARE a victim!

b. A victim of sin both committed BY you and against you.

c. But the real issue / problem is that you’re repeating them.

d. You can quit being a victim right now & become a victor over all that by repenting of YOUR sin and trusting Christ.

e. Invite Him to come stand between you & your past.