

SOUL FOOD

July 15, 2017

Ezekiel 18:20-24 **You Can't Blame Your Parents**

I have often heard it said that we live in a society of victims. There certainly are circumstances in which we are truly victimized by others. However, this reality does not negate the fact that we cannot blame others for what we do. Before God we are responsible for our actions and we are and will ultimately be evaluated by God in terms of what we DO.

God tells Ezekiel to proclaim this much needed message to His people. The son shall not suffer FOR his father's sin nor will the father suffer for his children's sin. God emphasized the fact that if we pursue righteousness we will be blessed and if we pursue iniquity we will reap accordingly. Thankfully, in the mercy of God there is the call and opportunity to repent and turn from his/her sins and turn to the pursuit of doing what is just and right. Earlier in this passage God particularly reminds His people as to what justice and righteousness look like, namely, *turning from idolatry, turning from sexual impurity, turning from the oppression of others, paying debts, no robbery, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, no usury, no injustice, and executing true justice toward others*. What a blessed society we would live in if more and more professing followers of Jesus faithfully lived this way.

God also warns those who profess to be righteous that if they turn away from righteousness and do injustice, he shall suffer the consequences for his actions. But, if he repents he will be forgiven. This passage repeats the truth that God takes no pleasure in punishing anyone; however, He is just and must punish sin. But, in the light of God's justice, He still holds out the offer of forgiveness and mercy; **"Turn, and live."**

We need to preach this reality to our own stubborn hearts. We must never forget that God sees all, knows all and even knows the very motives of our hearts. He extends to us a great amount of dignity by telling us that what we do matters to Him. Our thoughts and actions matter. We do not live in a meaningless vacuum or in a world void of true morality. Even when we are victimized in various ways we are still responsible for how we respond. Do we pursue vengeance or do we truly leave it in God's hands and pursue the sometimes difficult path of extending forgiveness as we have been forgiven?

God asks a question that is very revelatory of what is going on in our hearts: **Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?** Turn and live!