EZEKIEL 18

Sour Grapes: Every Soul Is Mine

> *“For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,” declares the Lord GOD. “Therefore, repent and live.”*
> EZEKIEL 18:32

Where Ezekiel has brought us

1. Ezekiel 18 is another undated oracle, falling between 592 BC (8:1) and 591 BC (20:1).

2. The proverb twisted a real truth.

The Proverb Rejected

“All souls are Mine” — and the soul who sins will die

EZEKIEL 18:2

“What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, ‘The fathers eat the sour grapes, But the children’s teeth are set on edge’?

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik puts it simply: ‘Just because the proverb was popular did not mean that it was true.’

WHAT IT MEANS

The people had a proverb that blamed their fathers: the parents ate “the sour grapes” and the children's teeth were set on edge (v2). God shuts it down with an oath — “As I live” (v3) — this proverb is finished in Israel.

nephesh (נֶפֶשׁ)
NEPHESH · “SOUL”

A living being, a person, a life. Nephesh is not a ghostly part of a man but the whole living person.

Three Generations

A righteous father, a violent son, and a grandson who chooses differently

EZEKIEL 18:6

and does not eat at the mountain shrines or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, or defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman during her menstrual period—

DAVID GUZIK

Morgan, in Guzik, names the point of the three generations in one line: 'Neither righteousness nor evil is hereditary.'

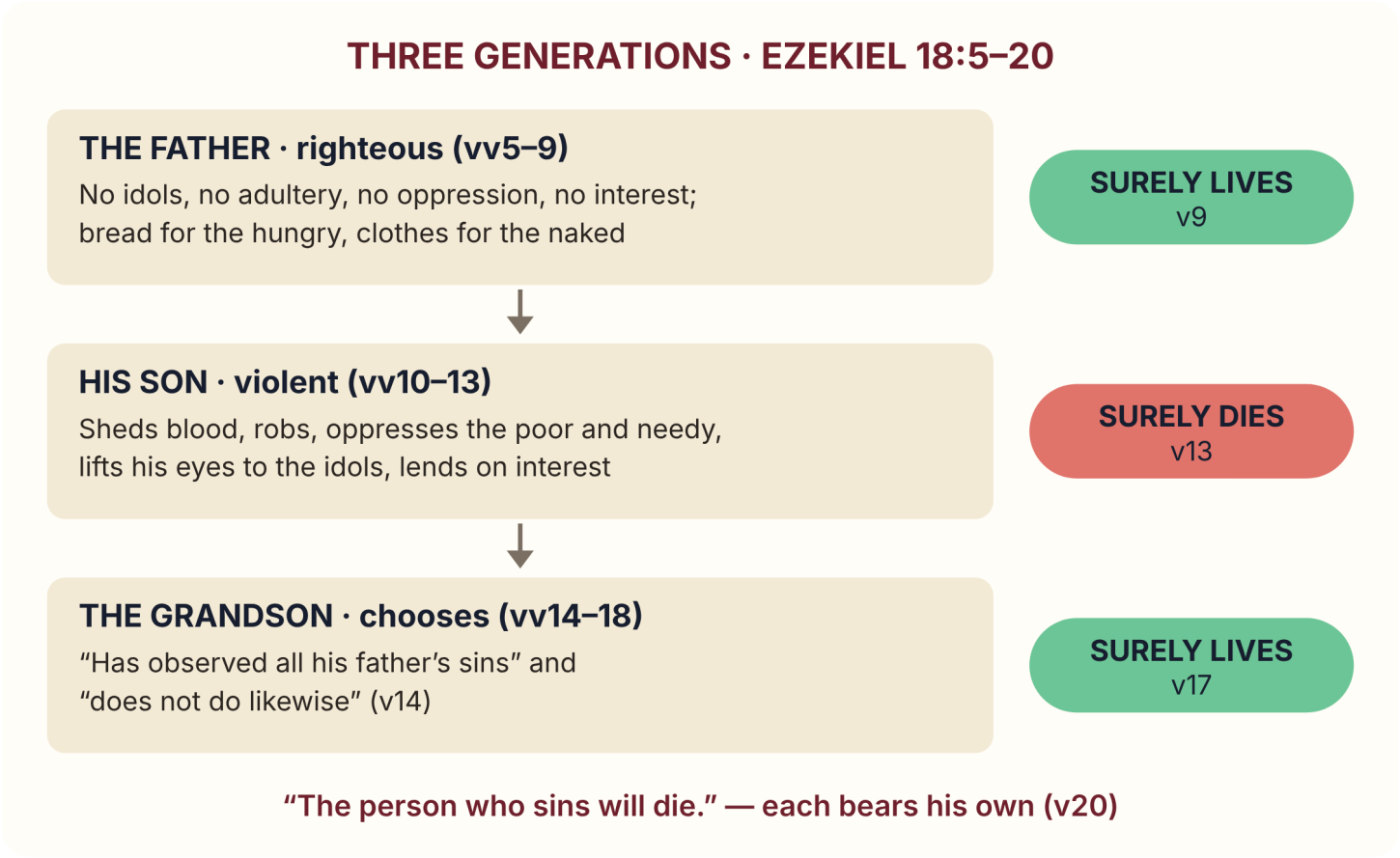
WHAT IT MEANS

Ezekiel paints three men. The father refuses idols and adultery, oppresses no one, feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, lends without greed — "he is righteous and will surely live" (v9).

tsaddîq (צַדִּיק)
TSADDIQ · "RIGHTEOUS"

Just, righteous. Ezekiel defines the righteous man by his conduct: he "practices justice and righteousness" (v5) — mishpat (H4941), what is right, and tsedaqah (H6666), right conduct.

Three Generations, Three Verdicts



Each man is judged by his own way — righteousness is not inherited, and neither is ruin (vv5–20).

The Principle and the Turn

Each man bears his own — and a man can turn either way

EZEKIEL 18:19

"Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity?' When the son has practiced justice and righteousness and has observed all My statutes and done them, he shall surely live.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik answers anyone who pictures a harsh God: 'God is not sadistic and cruel, making repentance impossible because He loves to see humanity suffer.'

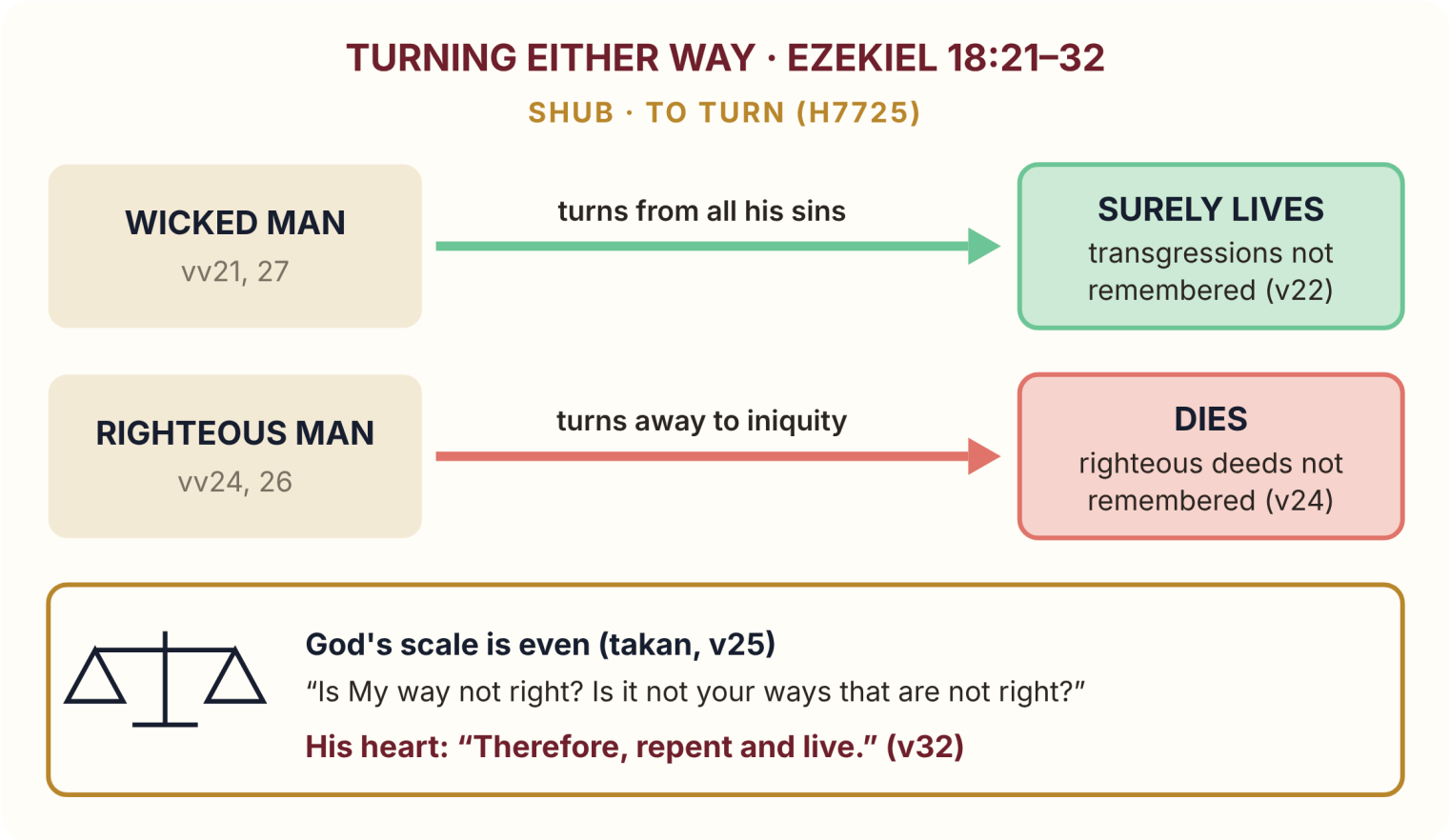
WHAT IT MEANS

The people object: why shouldn't the son bear the father's punishment (v19)? God's answer is the heart of the chapter: "The person who sins will die" (v20).

chāphēts (חָפֵץ)
CHAPHETS · "PLEASURE"

To delight in, to take pleasure. "Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked" (v23)?

A Man Can Turn Either Way



The wicked who turns lives and his sins are not remembered; the righteous who turns away cannot bank on his past (vv21–28).

Is My Way Not Right?

The people call God unfair — and He turns the charge around

EZEKIEL 18:25

*"Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not right.'
Hear now, O house of Israel! Is My way not right?
Is it not your ways that are not right?*

WHAT IT MEANS

Twice the people say, "The way of the Lord is not right" (vv25, 29). They wanted a God who would let them blame their fathers and still spare them.

tākan (תָּכַן)
TAKAN · "NOT RIGHT"

To weigh, to measure. When the people say, "The way of the Lord is not right" (v25), the word pictures a merchant's scale: God's way is 'not weighed out evenly' — not fair.

Repent and Live

God commands a new heart — and pleads, "Why will you die?"

EZEKIEL 18:30

"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct," declares the Lord GOD. "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you.

WHAT IT MEANS

The chapter ends in an altar call. God will judge each man "according to his conduct" (v30), so He calls: "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!"

shûb (שׁוּב)

SHUB · "TURN / REPENT"

To turn back, to return. Shub is the chapter's great word: turn runs through vv21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28 and 30. In v30 it comes twice — "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions" — the same Hebrew verb both times.

What to carry from this chapter

1

Popular isn't true.

Guzik: ‘Just because the proverb was popular did not mean that it was true.’

2

All souls are Mine.

God owns the father and the son alike and deals with each one directly (v4).

3

Not hereditary.

Morgan, in Guzik: ‘Neither righteousness nor evil is hereditary.’

4

Interest was ‘a bite.’

neshek (H5392), the interest the righteous man refuses to take, literally means ‘a bite’ (v8).

More to carry

5

The chain can break.

The grandson saw all his father's sins and did not do likewise — and he lives (vv14–17).

6

Forgiven, not on probation.

The wicked man who turns has none of his transgressions remembered against him (v22).

7

A level scale.

takan (H8505) means to weigh — the people called God's way uneven, but their own scales were crooked (v25).

8

God wants men saved.

Taylor, in Guzik: ‘It is the Lord's longing and will and purpose that men should be saved.’

Talk it through

1. What is your version of the sour-grapes proverb — the story you tell yourself about why your sin isn't really your fault?

2. The grandson “has observed all his father’s sins” and chose differently. What patterns from your family do you need to see clearly and refuse to repeat?

3. God says the turned man's transgressions “will not be remembered against him.” Do you live like a forgiven man or like a man on probation?

4. Verse 24 warns a righteous man not to bank on his past. Where are you tempted to coast on yesterday's faithfulness?

5. God commands, “make yourselves a new heart,” yet He promises to give one (36:26). How do His command and His gift meet in Jesus?

CLOSING

Every soul is His — the father's, the son's, and yours. You are not chained to your family's sin, and you cannot hide behind it. The God who has no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies still says, "Therefore, repent and live."

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

O·I·A study, slides and reflection journal: see the Ezekiel study page.