

GOD'S EQUAL WAYS

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It is amazing and also very sad how often God the Creator of all things is judged by His own creation. Mankind often slanders and condemns his Maker. Romans 3:4 speaks about this situation and reminds us of Who is always right: “*Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.*” God will always be proven right in the end. In the Old Testament, God’s people Israel accused God of being unfair. Israel said, “The way of the Lord is not equal” (Ezek 18:25,29). They were claiming that “*The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge*” (Ezek 18:2). By their parable, they were declaring that God was punishing them not for their own sins, but for the sins of their fathers.

A rebellious house

God defended Himself against the false accusation that His ways were unequal. In Ezekiel 18:25, God said, “*Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?*” He repeated this in verse 29: “O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?” With these rhetorical questions, God was demonstrating how He was totally fair and right in His dealings with these people. It was these Israelites who were “unequal.” They were a “rebellious house.” When God first called Ezekiel to be a prophet to the Israelites in captivity in Babylon, He said, “Son of man, *I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted.* I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. *And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee*” (Ezek 2:3-8; see also Ezek 3:9,26-27; 17:12; 44:6). God also told His prophet Ezekiel, “*Son of man, thou dwellest*

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(continued)

in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house" (Ezek 12:2; see also verses 3,9,25). Contrary to what their parable said, the bottom line is that Israel's teeth were set on edge because *they* had sinned. *Their* ways were unequal, not God's!

Judgment according to works

In Ezekiel 18:4, God said, "*The soul that sins, it shall die.*" Israel was guilty of sin. God said that a wicked son of a righteous man would surely die because of his sins (Ezek 18:5-13,18). But a righteous son of a wicked man would not die because of his father's wickedness, but would surely live (Ezek 18:14-17,19). The people asked, "Does not the son bear the iniquity of the father?" (Ezek 18:19), but God answered, "*The soul that sins, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him*" (Ezek 18:20). A wicked man who repents will surely live (Ezek 18:21-23,27-32), and a righteous man who turns to wickedness will surely die (Ezek 18:24-26). In Ezekiel 18:30-32, God informed Israel that they were being punished for their own sins and urged them to repent: "*Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.*" Whether Israel lived or died would be according to what they themselves did. God affirmed that His ways are indeed "equal," but it was the ways of the people of Israel that were unequal (Ezek 18:25,29). According to this same principle, the New Testament teaches that each person will be judged according to his own deeds, whether good or bad, and will either live or die (eternally) based upon what they themselves have done (Matt 16:27; John 5:28-29; Rom 2:5-11; 14:11-12; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Pet 1:17; Rev 2:23; 20:12-13; 22:12). Therefore, we must make our ways equal, and not be rebellious against God, because He is *always* righteous and will judge us accordingly.