



Ezekiel 17-18

Tape #7321
Ezekiel 17-18
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now in our Bibles to the seventeenth chapter of Ezekiel. Ezekiel said that...

The word of the Lord came to him saying, Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel (17:1-2).

Now a parable was a story, and Jesus used this method of teaching quite often. It was a story that had a moral, or it had an impact. It was an analogy. Here is a parable, a story, in sort of a riddle form. You have to think about it to catch the meaning. But, of course the Lord is always good in that He interpreted the meanings for us. So...

Say, Thus saith the Lord God; A great eagle with great wings, long wings, full of feathers, which had divers colors, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar: [So the cedar trees of Lebanon, this great eagle, full wings, many colors came and, and cropped off this highest branch of the cedar.] He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and he carried it into a land of traffic; and he set it in a city of merchants. He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; and he placed it by the great waters, and he set it as a willow tree. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, it brought forth branches, and it shot forth [twigs, or] sprigs. And so there was also another great eagle with great wings, many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation. It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, and that it might be a goodly vine. Now say, Thus saith the Lord God; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots. Yes, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind touches it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew (17:3-10).

That's the riddle, that's the parable. Now the Lord gives the meaning. But, first of all let's take a look at a little bit of the historic background. This particular prophecy was given in about the fifth year of King Zedekiah.

Now during the reign of Jehoiachin, the next to the last king in Israel, Nebuchadnezzar came with the Babylonian army, and they captured the city of Jerusalem. They took Jehoiachin as a captive back to Babylon, along with many of the relatives of the king, many of the leaders of the nation were taken captive to Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar set on the throne in Jerusalem, Zedekiah, and he made him the king over the nation. But he was sort of a vassal king. He was to pay taxes to Nebuchadnezzar, and he was to pay homage to the Babylonian rule.

Now as Zedekiah began to reign, and the Babylonian troops withdrew to Babylon, Zedekiah began then to rebel against the Babylonian kingdom. In his rebellion against the Babylonian kingdom, and this was about the time that he was rebelling, he turned to Egypt for help. He sent ambassadors down to Egypt, he sought to make a military alliance with the Egyptians. He felt that he could, with the strength of Egypt, overthrow the Babylonians. He felt that they would not really send their army back again, or if they did, it would be insignificant against the combined powers of Egypt, and Israel. Thus, he made this covenant, turning towards Egypt.

This was the second eagle. The first eagle is Babylon, that came and conquered over Israel. The second eagle is Egypt, that Israel began to turn towards. So now he gives the interpretation.

Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Say now to the rebellious house (17:11-12),

That is, king Zedekiah, who was rebelling against Babylon. Now this rebellion was encouraged by many of the false prophets. They were encouraging Zedekiah, saying that, "Surely the Lord will deliver the

Babylonians unto you. The Babylonians will not be able to, to come against this city. With your combined forces with Egypt, you'll be able to conquer them". They were sending messages to the captives in Babylon saying, "Hang loose, don't build houses, don't settle down. Because you're gonna be coming back very soon". So they had all of these false prophecies.

Jeremiah on the other hand was sending messages, and saying, "Settle down, plant vineyards, build houses, you're gonna be there for seventy years. The time of captivity is going to last for seventy years because the, you've been in the land for four hundred and ninety years, you did not give the land rest, one year out of seven, which God commanded you to do. So the land actually has seventy years coming to it, of rest. Since you did not give it rest, God's gonna give it rest, by keeping you there in Babylon, for seventy years". So there was a conflict between Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the false prophets who were encouraging the people in, in the rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. So here is Ezekiel now again giving the word of the Lord saying to the rebellious house...

Don't you know what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and he has taken the king and the princes, and he has led them with him to Babylon; [Jehoiachin, and the princes were taken as captive.] And he has taken of the king's seed, [That is, one of the descendants of David, Zedekiah.] and he made a covenant with him, and he has taken an oath from him: and he has also taken the mighty of the land: [So he made this covenant, he made Zedekiah to swear allegiance, which Zedekiah did, and, allegiance to Babylon.] That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up (17:12-14),

The determination of, of Nebuchadnezzar was to keep the kingdom from becoming strong. They took the mighty men, they took the strong men as captives, left those that were weak, the older people and all. Because they didn't want the people to get rebellion in their minds, so it might not try to lift itself up.

and by keeping of his covenant it might stand. But he [Zedekiah] rebelled against [Nebuchadnezzar] in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, [The second eagle] that they might give him horses and many people. Shall this prosper (17:14-15)?

Now it was going on at this, right at this time. Ezekiel is saying, "Shall this prosper?"

shall he escape that does such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered? ["Is it going to be successful", his breaking of this covenant that he made.] As I live, saith the Lord God, surely in the place where the king dwells that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he broke, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die (17:15-16).

So the prediction is that Zedekiah will die in Babylon. He'll not be successful in the rebellion. Trusting in Egypt, he will not find deliverance, but surely he will die there in Babylon. Of course, that's exactly what happened. Zedekiah died in Babylon, he was taken captive.

Neither shall Pharaoh with his might army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounds, and building forts, to cut off many persons: Now seeing he is despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, [That is, he shook his hands on the thing with Nebuchadnezzar.] and he had not done all of these things, he shall not escape. [There will be no escaping from the destruction that will come from Babylon.] Therefore thus saith the Lord God; As I live, surely my oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he has broken, even it will I recompense on his own head (17:17-19).

He has despised the covenant with God. He had broken God's covenant, now he's breaking man's covenant. God has declared, "You make a covenant, you're to keep it. You take a vow, you're to keep it." He had broken his covenant with God, now he is breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar.

And I will spread my net upon him, he will be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and I will plead with him there for his trespass that he has trespassed against me. And all of his fugitives with all of his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain will be scattered toward all the winds: and you will know that I the Lord have spoken it (17:20-21).

"When Zedekiah becomes a captive, when the rest of the people are scattered, you'll know", God said, "that I said it. You'll know that this is the word of the Lord. Whereas the false prophets were saying other things, you'll know that they are false prophets."

One of the dangers of course of false prophets, is that people follow them, and they don't realize until

it's too late, that they were following a false prophet. It was tragic! They were receiving all of this encouragement, in their rebellion, by the false prophets. It was not until the Babylonians came, and the city was conquered, Zedekiah was taken as a captive back to Babylon, then they realized, "Ooh! We listened to the wrong people. We listened to the false prophets rather than Jeremiah, and Isaiah, and the true prophets of God."

Now in verse twenty two, the scene shifts.

Thus saith the Lord God; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; and I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent: And in the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bring forth fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; and in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all of the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, and have exalted the low tree, and I've dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken it I have done it (17:22-24).

This is the promise of the Messiah, that God would raise up the low tree, the tender branch, and make of it a great tree, that the world will find it's place of refuge under its branches. That Jesus will actually, as the kids were telling us, and they're so right, He's coming again, and He's going to set up God's kingdom upon the earth, and it's a kingdom that shall last, and shall stand, shall flourish, and shall bring forth fruit.

Chapter 18

Now as we move into chapter eighteen...

The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that 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 (18:1-2)?

Jeremiah makes reference to this proverb also because they were saying it in Jerusalem, as well as using it in Babylon. Basically, it was saying, "All of our problems are our father's fault." It was not wanting to take the responsibility of their own guilt. Thus, "We are suffering for the sins of our fathers. We are being punished because of the sins of our fathers. We are here in captivity, in Babylon, because our fathers sinned." So they are blaming their calamities upon their fathers, and thus the proverb, "Our fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." "We are suffering as a result of what our fathers have done."

But as I live, saith the Lord God; you shall not have an occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. [God is going to point out that this proverb that was popular, is not a true proverb, for God said,] All souls are mine; the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: and the soul that sinneth, it shall die (18:3-4).

"You will not die for your father's sins, and your father will not die for your sins. If you die it is because of your sins that you die." As with the children, as with the fathers, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

But if a man is just, and does that which is lawful and right (18:5),

Notice now the things that God wants us to do. These are the things that will come from a righteous life. These are the things that a righteous person will do. One who is just, one who is lawful and right.

He has not eaten on the mountains (18:6),

Now that was going up to the mountains to worship the false gods, taking the food up to offer the oblations, and sacrifices to the false gods, and eating as you worshiped these false gods. Offering the, the meat to them, and then eating the meat, and joining yourself with these false gods. So, "those who have not gone up upon the mountains", to eat with their false gods.

neither have lifted up their eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither have they defiled his neighbour's wife, neither has he come near a menstruous woman, And he has not oppressed any, but has restored to the debtor his pledge (18:6-7),

Now under the law, if you loaned money to a person, or a tool to a person, and they gave you say their clothes, their coat for a pledge to guarantee that they would pay you back, "I'll bring it back this evening", you know. So you take this coat for a pledge. Under the law, Exodus twenty two, you were to give them

back the coat before nightfall. You weren't to keep it overnight. Because they used their coats as a blanket, and to wrap themselves in at night. So you weren't to keep it overnight, if you'd taken a coat as a pledge. It's just kindness. It's just not depriving the person of, of the comfort and warmth at night, because of a debt that they have.

he has spoiled none by violence, but he has given his bread to the hungry, he has clothed the naked; And he has not given forth upon usury, [He has not charged an exorbitant interest on the money that he loaned.] neither has taken any increase, and has withdrawn his hand from iniquity, has executed true judgment between man and man, And he's walked in my statutes, has kept my judgments, and dealt truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God (18:7-9).

Now these things that God is advocating here as righteous, as just, as good, these are the things that you should do. These are the things that you should follow if you want to please God. Notice it starts out with your relationship with Him. You don't have false gods, false idols that you are worshiping. Then it goes to your relationship with your fellow man. You haven't played around with your neighbor's wife. You're, you're faithful in your marriage. You are not oppressing people. You restore to the debtor his pledge. You, you're living a, a good life. You're, you seek to be true in your judgment. You've walked in God's statutes. God said, "You're gonna live. This is the way to live."

But if he has a son [Now here's a good man, does the right things and all, good man, but he has a son,] who is a robber, who sheds blood, and he [his son] doeth not any of those duties, but he has eaten on the mountains, he has defiled his neighbour's wife, He has oppressed the poor and the needy, he has spoiled by violence, he has not restored the pledge, [he has not lifted] he has lifted up his eyes to idols, and he has committed abominations, He has given forth upon usury, he has taken increase: shall he than live? he shall not live: he has done all of these abominations; and he will surely die; and his blood shall be upon him (18:10-13).

Now you can be a righteous dad, you can do the right things, but you can have a son who is just a thief, and does abominable things. As a righteous dad, you will live. Your unrighteous son will die. Your unrighteous son cannot really be justified by what you have done that is good. But then...

If your unrighteous son has a son, and he sees all of his father's sins which he has done, and he considers, [He says, "Man that's no way to live, that's...", and he looks at his dad, and he says, "Man that guy's a rat, I don't want to live like that", and so he doesn't follow the pattern of his dad, so he goes again through the same things.] he has not eaten upon the mountains, he hasn't lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, he's not defiled his neighbour's wife, Neither has oppressed any, he's not withheld the pledge, neither has he spoiled by violence, he has given his bread to the hungry, covered the naked with a garment, [And so forth] He shall not die for the iniquity of his father, but he shall surely live. As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, and spoiled his brother by violence, and did that which is not good among the people, lo, he will die in his iniquity. You say, Why? does not the son bear the iniquity of the father (18:14-19)?

Now under the law it says, "The sins of the father's will be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation", but many people stop there, it goes on to say, "those who continue in them". If you continue in the pattern of your fathers who are unrighteous, who are wicked, then their sins will be visited upon you. But here's a wicked father, has a son. Or, here's a righteous father, has a wicked son, and now that wicked son has a righteous son. Those that are righteous will live because of their righteousness, those that are unrighteous will die because of their sins. Each man will be judged individually by God, and will give an account of himself before God. You are not accountable for any one in this whole wide world, but you. When you stand before God, you are the only one that you're gonna have to give an account for. So...

When the son [He said] has done that which is lawful and right, and has kept all my statutes, and has done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die (18:19-20).

Now there are two biblical definitions for death. The one is the separation of a man's consciousness from his body. When your brain is no longer functioning. When your brain ceases working, you are considered dead, clinically dead. They remove the life support systems, when the EEG goes flat. No brain activity. The separation of your consciousness from your body. The Bible makes reference to that, it said,

“And he gave up the ghost”. King James’ terminology. It’s a way of saying, “he died”. The spirit departed from the body. The consciousness was no longer there. It’s a way of saying he died. That’s physical death.

There is a spiritual death that is the separation of your consciousness from God. If you live with no thought of God, no conscious relationship with God, no giving God of any thought or place, in your decision making processes, if you live as though God does not exist, without the consciousness of God, then the Bible declares that, “You are dead”.

Now the thing that kills the consciousness of God, is sin. Because, when I am in sin, and I’m convicted by the spirit of my sin, if I will repent and confess my sin, God will forgive me that sin. But if I am determined to go on in that sin, then I must stifle the voice and the conviction of God’s Spirit, upon my heart. I seek to deliberately and willfully put God out of my consciousness. Put Him out of my mind, because I don’t want to think about God, because that makes me feel guilty, because of my sin. Thus, sin separates you from the life of God, and from that consciousness of God’s nearness, and God’s fellowship. That is why the Bible said, “The wages of sin is death”. That’s referring to this second definition, the separation of your consciousness from God.

So that, throughout the Bible so often, unless you realize the two definitions, one talking of physical death, and the other talking of spiritual death, you can get confused with some of the scriptures, when it talks about dying, or talks about death, you can be confused. For instance, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life, and he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and if you live, and believe in me, you will never die”.

Now that is not a promise that you will not have physical death. The Bible said, “It is appointed unto man once to die”, talking of physical death. Jesus is saying, “You will never die spiritually”. That is, you will never be consciously separated from God. You’ll always be in communion, fellowship with God. You won’t die spiritually. You will be changed, you’re gonna get a new body, but you’re not gonna die. “To be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord.” In a new body, there with Him, you will not die.

Paul the apostle said, “And you who were dead in your trespasses and sins, who in times past, you walked according to the course of this world, according to the principality of this earth, that even now works in the children of disobedience; among whom you all had your manner of living, as you lived according to the lusts of your flesh, and the lust of your mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in His mercy, and His love, wherewith He has loved us hath made us alive.” Talking about spiritual life, “made us alive, quickened us together with Christ Jesus”.

Jesus talked about the necessity of having a spiritual birth. He said, “If you want to enter the kingdom of heaven, your spirit has to come alive.” You see, God is a superior Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, and man is an inferior trinity, he was created spirit, mind, and body. But with sin, he was inverted, and became, body, mind, and the spirit died. God said, “The day you eat it, you’ll die.” The spirit died. With the body becoming uppermost, the mind ruled by the body, he lost fellowship with God, he was spiritually dead. The place where man meets God is the place of the spirit. That’s where God and I connect. Jesus said, “God is a Spirit, they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth”.

When the spirit is uppermost in my life, then I’m connecting with God, His Spirit, and His Spirit bears witness with my spirit, that I am a son of God. That’s where I meet God. That’s where I connect with God. But if your body, and body appetites are uppermost, spirit is dead, you’ve lost your connection with God.

Now Jesus said, “You’ve gotta have a spiritual birth. You were born once, a fleshly nature, body uppermost, living after the mind, the lust of the flesh, the lusts of the mind were by nature, the children of wrath, even as others. You’ve gotta be born again. You’ve gotta have a spiritual birth. What happens when you have a spiritual birth? You become inverted again, the spirit is uppermost, and you again are living spiritually in this life, and relationship with God’s spiritual life.

You have been made alive, who were dead in your trespasses and sins, but now this spiritual life, and again connecting with God. That’s your hope of coming into the kingdom of God. Apart from spiritual life, you can’t. So it takes a new birth, a spiritual birth. Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.” You’ve got to be born again! You’ve got to have the second birth, the spiritual birth, that spirit which died as the result of sin, is made alive in and through Christ Jesus! So if the

wicked...

The soul that sinneth, 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. [You will stand before God to answer for you!] But if the wicked will turn from all of his sins that he has committed, [Now this middle one in the story of uh, who did all of these horrible things, if he will turn from his wickedness, his sins] and if he will keep my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, and [shall] he shall surely live, he shall not die (18:20-21).

There is forgiveness, there is pardon. God will wash you and cleanse you from your sins!

And all of his transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him (18:22):

God will never bring them up again, complete, and full forgiveness! We talk a lot about forgiveness, but unfortunately when we talk about forgiveness, we usually are thinking in human terms, rather than divine terms. Sometimes we'll say, "Well I forgive you, but I won't forget!" That's so typical. But it isn't real forgiveness unless it is forgotten. That is, you don't bring it up again. You don't mention it again. You let it die. In some future dispute, you don't say, "But you remember when you did...", "But you forgave me!"

Now God won't do that to you. When you turn from your sin, and you turn to God for the cleansing, He washes it away. He'll never mention it again! He won't bring up the past.

Now a lot of times, our minds won't let us forget. Many times, we are tortured by the memory of what we have done. But the wonderful thing to realize is that God will never mention it again! He won't bring it up. It's gone as far as God is concerned. It's over. It's past. That's the beautiful thing about God's forgiveness. It is so complete, when He forgives, that's it, never mentions it again. "All of the transgressions that he has committed they shall not be mentioned unto him:"...

in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live (18:22).

Life to those who were dead in their trespasses and sins. Then God said...

Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live (18:23)?

God is saying, "I don't want you to die in your wickedness! I don't want you to live in wickedness, I want you to turn from wickedness and really live! Have eternal life!" "God is not willing", Peter tells us, "that any should perish. But that all should come to repentance." God has done every thing short of violating your free will to save you. Kids were warning us tonight about hell. That's good. "God isn't willing that any should perish." God gives man opportunities over and over again to repent. God calls for us to turn from our wickedness that we might live.

If a person does go to hell, he can, but it isn't easy, you have to fight God every step of the way! You have to fight the conviction of the Holy Spirit, you've got to fight against Jesus Christ, and His work on the cross for you, you've got to reject the love of God, and you've got to struggle against the conviction of the Spirit all the way! But if you are determined enough, stubborn enough, abdurant enough, hang in, you can make it! But it's not easy. God is not willing that any should perish, and He will do every thing to bring you to repentance, to bring you to that life that He wants you to have in the Spirit, that life in Jesus Christ. But here is something that we need to consider...

When the righteous turns away from his righteousness, and he commits iniquity, and he does according to all of the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All of his righteousness that he had done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Yet you say, Well the way of the Lord is not equal. [Or, "God is not fair".] Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way [fair, or] equal? and your ways [unfair, or] unequal (18:24-25)?

Conversely, if a righteous man turn from his righteousness, and begins to live in rebellion against God, in sin, God said, "His righteousness will not be mentioned. It will be forgotten, and he will die in his sin." There is the issue of eternal security. "Once saved, always saved." Surely there is much truth in that. But yet, I would never want to be guilty of offering to a person a false hope of eternal life.

As Paul in Galatians five, is rehearsing for us the works of the flesh, he says something quite significant there, he said, "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, sexual uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strifes, seditions,

heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revilings, and such like, of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Now if a person walking with the Lord should turn from the Lord, and begin to walk after the flesh, living in adultery, or fornication, or sexual impurities, or gets involved in drugs, or is filled with hatred, and wrath, and strife, drunkenness, revilings, Paul tells us very clearly, “they are not going to inherit the kingdom of God”.

Now the question arises, “Then were they ever saved?”, and that is the question, a question that will have to be answered by someone much smarter than I. I don’t know. I do know though, that if you are living in sin, if you are going on practicing sin, living in adultery, or in fornication, or in these other things of the flesh that Paul lists, the word of God clearly declares that you’re not going to inherit the kingdom of heaven. I am not going to give you any false assurances, or false hopes, that some past experience of righteousness that you may have had, is going to secure you in the future. God says that, “their righteousness shall not even be mentioned”.

So you can deal with it as you want, but don’t look to me for comfort. Unless, unless you are really timid in your relationship with the Lord, and you’re not really sure of your salvation, but you want to follow the Lord, and you’re doing your best, and you want to live for Jesus and all, you’re not really sure you’re saved, you come to me, and I’ll give you all kinds of assurance. I will set you on the solid rock and make you very secure, in the finished work of Jesus Christ. But if you’re out there playing with the world, and doing the worldly things, if you come to me, or Romaine, we’ll rattle your cage!

When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in them; for his iniquity that he has done he shall die. [God is saying, “My ways are fair”, and God then repeats basically what He has said.] Again, when the wicked man turns away from his wickedness that he has committed, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considered, [He woke up, he said, “Man this is no way to live!”], and he came to himself like the prodigal son, and he considered.] and he turned away from all of his transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live, and not die (18:26-28).

There is forgiveness with God! Just turning to God, there is forgiveness, no matter what you may have done! If you will turn to God, there is forgiveness, there is cleansing, there is pardon, there’s new life in Christ for you.

Yet the house of Israel says, The way of the Lord is not fair. [And God responds,] O house of Israel, are not my ways equal or fair? are not your ways unfair? Therefore [God said] I will judge you O house of Israel, every one according to his ways. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin (18:29-30).

I look at the ruined lives as the result of walking, and living after the flesh. The lives that have been ruined through promiscuous sex, the lives all around us that are being destroyed as the result of their promiscuous sex. The various sexually transmitted diseases that are epidemic throughout the land. The unwanted pregnancies.

I look at these children who were here tonight, and I realize that in the general population, children, the age of the children that were here tonight, are many of them already actively involved in sexual relationships. Many of the pregnancies are of little girls, the ages of these little girls that were here tonight. Because the world is not discouraging them from sexual activity. They are lying to them, telling them that it’s possible to engage in “safe sex”, and are seeking to educate them in how to practice safe sex, which is a fallacy. The AIDS virus is smaller than the condom, can go right through a condom. It is a lie to say that you will be safe, just by using a condom.

Now it used to be, you’d mention something like that in church, everybody would be shocked! But we get it on TV. We’re desensitized you know, to filth, and to rottenness. But because it’s there, you can’t hide your head in the sand and pretend that it doesn’t exist! Lives are being ruined, before they ever had a chance to get started, because of sin.

God warns against these things that do ruin! That’s what really makes sin, sin, is that it ruins. That’s, that’s why, you see, whatever will ruin you, is sin. Whatever will make you a better person is righteousness.

Easy way to define sin, well it's just something that destroys you, ruins your life, messes you up completely, that's sin. Those are the things that God has forbidden. Because God wants you to have a good life! Jesus said, "I've come so that you might have life, and that more abundantly!" He wants the good life for you. "And He has shown you O man, what is good." If you will follow these rules, your life will be rich, it'll be blessed, it'll be happy, it'll be successful, it'll be long, prosperous, full, fulfilling. But if you engage in these things after the flesh, then your life is going to be filled with sorrow, anxieties, pain, misery, woe, worries. Your life will be ruined by sin. So God is calling them to turn from their transgressions, so that they would not be ruined by their iniquity. Then He gets a little more, a little more emphasis, He says...

Cast away from you all your transgressions (18:31),

There's an urgency there, "throw it out, get rid of it don't sort of pamper it, don't excuse it, don't procrastinate with it and say, 'Well one of these days, I plan to really get serious about this, and I'm gonna change, and I'm gonna live the right kind of life. But I got a few more things I gotta do first!'" Don't procrastinate. Cast it away! Get rid of it, as quickly as possible!

As we mentioned this morning, it's like holding, taking a hot coal out of your barbecue, and holding it in your hand, and hearing the flesh sizzle, and smell the burning flesh, and say, "One of these days, I'm gonna get rid of this. That's sure ruining my hand! I can see what it's doing to me, and it's not good. I plan to really deal with this one day!" Well, the longer you hold it, the more damage it's gonna do. The longer you hold onto a sin in your life, the more damage it's gonna do. God is saying, "Cast it away, get rid of it!" The idea is urgency. Do it now, get rid of it now, don't live another day in sin! Don't go another hour in that transgression. Now is the accepted time. So the urgency, "Cast away from you all your transgressions"...

whereby you have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: [God is offering to make you a new heart, your spirit will come alive, you'll have now a heart that is changed! People discover something quite fascinating when they come to Jesus Christ, and that is the things that they once loved, they now loathe, and the things they once loathed, they now love. God gives you a new heart! He changes you from within. It isn't some big struggle to get rid of that destructive element in your life, the Lord takes it away! Takes away the desires, gives you that new heart, that new spirit. For God then says...

for why will you die (18:31),

Why destroy yourself hanging on to that sin? Holding onto that? We were sharing with the kids up at camp this week how that over in the Philippines, monkey is considered a great delicacy, if they want to really honor you out in one of the native villages, they will serve you monkey. The way they catch the monkey is rather ingenious in that they take and make a hole in a coconut. Just large enough for the monkey to squeeze his hand down inside. Then they put rice down in that coconut, so that the little monkey squeezes his hand in, and then he grabs a fist full of rice. But with his fist doubled up, there's no way he can pull his hand back out. He tries to pull his hand out, and all, but he can't get it out.

So he finally scampers over to a tree, and he tries to climb the tree. But with the coconut on his fist, he can't get any grip. So he just starts knocking on the tree with the coconut. That's the sign to the native sitting in his hut, that he's caught his monkey. He hears the knocking on the tree, and he runs out, and he grabs the little monkey. He can't scamper away up the tree because of this coconut on his fist.

Now all he would have to do is let go of the rice, pull his hand out, and scamper away, and be free. But he hangs on, and his holding on costs him his life. Now we say, "Stupid little monkey." Wait a minute! How bout' those people who are holding on to some sin in their life that is destroying them? They've gone into captivity of the enemy. Because they won't let go of that sin. It's costing them their life. When all they'd have to do is let go! God is here saying, "Let go! Why will you die? Why do you want to die? It's destroying you, it's ruining you! Let go of it!"

For [God said] I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, saith the Lord God: therefore turn yourselves, and live (18:32).

God's pleading. Again, He's pleading. He has no pleasure in, in the death of the wicked. That is the death of him who dies, the and, the idea here is wicked. In chapter thirty three of Ezekiel, it actually says, "For behold, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." The Bible does declare that God does have pleasure in the death of His saints. "Precious in the eyes of the Lord, is the death of His saints." He's got the

welcome committee all set to welcome them home you know! When a saint dies, hey that's, that's graduation day! That's glory! That's coronation! But when the sinner dies, it's hopelessness, emptiness. So God says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, so turn, and live!"

Father help us to live righteous lives. Help us Lord to become all that You want us to be, walking after the Spirit, living after the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, that we might deny ourselves, the flesh life, and take up our cross to follow Jesus Christ. Lord we realize that even here tonight, there are those whose lives presently, is being destroyed, ruined by sin. You're speaking to them Lord, through Your word, You're saying, "Turn, for why will you die? I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Turn, and live!" Lord You're offering them forgiveness tonight, the cleansing, the washing, the forgetting. May they respond to Your offer. May they pay heed to Your invitation, and may they receive Your forgiveness, Your love. May they Lord receive a new spirit, a new heart. A heart after God, and the things of God. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Shall we stand?

The prayer room is open after service. There will be elders of the church back there to pray with you, or for you, if you have a need in your life. Doesn't have to be salvation. Going through a hard time, if there's a physical need, you'd like for the elders of the church to pray with you, they'll be back there to minister to those who desire a prayer of the elders tonight.

May now the Lord's blessing rest upon you. May you indeed live after the Spirit, and after the things of the Spirit, as you walk in love, and as you show that love to the world around you. I was thinking how the kids were sharing they're gonna be different at home. That's great! I hope you will be too! Ha, ha! God's working; Let's let Him work in our hearts. Let's let Him just fashion us into the image of Jesus. May that be the prayer and the goal of our lives, to be conformed into the image of our Lord. That we might love as He loves, forgive as He forgave. Be all that God would have us to be.