

**“Set Free From Excuses”**  
**Ezekiel 18**  
**Sermon Series: “Set Free To Live Free”**

**Introduction:** Craig Groeschel said, **“You can make excuses or you can make progress, but you can’t make both.”** In our lives, are we making excuses or are we making progress? **It’s time for us to stop making excuses and choose to make progress in our lives. Excuses enslave us, but we can be set free from them. In this text, I want to show us three choices we can make that will enable us to make progress and 3 reasons why we should make these choices.**

**Choice #1: I choose to stop making excuses (v. 1-3).** The problem of playing the “blame game” is not a modern problem. It was also a problem for the children of Israel during the prophet Ezekiel’s day. They expressed it in the proverb that is quoted in verse 2. By using this proverb, they were saying that their forefathers had sinned, but they were bearing the guilt and suffering for those sins. However, in verse 3, God told them not to use this proverb anymore, and He is telling us today to stop making the same kinds of excuses. In reality, this proverb was a misinterpretation of Exodus 20:5. The Bible does teach that there are consequences to our actions that affect others (including our children), but it also teaches that we must answer for ourselves alone. God doesn’t pass guilt down to succeeding generations. Now let’s apply this to us today. We tend to make excuses even though God tells us not to. We blame things on: circumstances, fate or luck, physiological disorders, parents/other people, background/environment, the devil, and even God.

**Choice #2: I choose to accept personal responsibility for my life before the Lord (v. 4-20).** Verse 20 summarizes the principle by saying, “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.” **We must answer for ourselves and no one else.** The biblical principle is twofold: (1) In an earthly sense, the principle is that we reap what we sow. (2) In an eternal sense, the principle is that we must stand before God to give an account for our lives. Our only hope then is Jesus Christ because “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), and the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). This passage gives three illustrations of this principle: a righteous man who does what is right (v. 5-9), a wicked son who has a righteous father (v. 10-13), and a righteous son who has a wicked father (v. 14-20). How does this passage apply to us?

- A. We can’t really get away with anything.
- B. We only have to answer for ourselves and not for anyone else including our parents or our children.
- C. To a great extent, we determine our own character and destiny by our choices.
- D. Parents should teach their children to be responsible by disciplining them in order to teach them that there are always consequences.

- E. We have to answer to God and not anyone else. Thus, we don't have to be burdened by other people's expectations.
- F. We can break the cycle and overcome our past through the power of Christ.
- G. We all need God's mercy through Christ because we are all guilty.

**Choice #3: I choose to change (v. 14, 21-32).** God's invitation is "turn and live." We can repent. We can have a change of mind that leads to a change of heart that leads to a change of action. We can consider and not do likewise (v. 14).

**Why should we make these choices? Here are three biblical, theological reasons:**

**Reason #1: God is my judge (v. 30).** The whole chapter implies this by stating repeatedly that we are personally accountable to the Lord, but in verse 30, the Lord specifically told them that He would judge them. Primarily, this chapter focuses on the earthly consequences of our choices, but it is also teaching us that there is an eternal consequence to every choice that we make for which we will answer to Jesus. If you are not a Christian, you will be judged by Him at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15), and if you are a Christian, you will be judged for your works after salvation at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

**Reason #2: God is my gracious forgiver (v. 31).** Ephesians 1:7 says, "In Him [Jesus] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." There are still earthly consequences, but through the cross of Jesus, God will forgive us of every sin and hold them against us no more by His inexhaustible grace.

**Reason #3: God gives me a new heart and the ability to change (v. 32).** We do not change on our own by our willpower. In Christ, God makes us alive on the inside, which is called regeneration. He gives us a new heart and indwells us by His Spirit. This gives us new desires and the power to live out of those new desires instead of our old, sinful nature.

**Conclusion:** Are we going to make excuses or make progress? Let's stop making excuses, take personal responsibility, and choose to change because of who Jesus is and what He has done for us!