

# Sour Grapes

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of taking personal responsibility for our actions and choices, rather than blaming others or our circumstances.*

**Duration:** 36:46

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 18:2

**Topics:** "Personal Responsibility", "Repentance"

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## Description

This sermon focuses on the importance of personal responsibility before God, emphasizing the need for individuals to acknowledge their sins and seek forgiveness directly from God. It contrasts the idea of blaming others for our failures with the biblical truth that each person is accountable for their own actions and choices. The message highlights God's mercy, forgiveness, and the opportunity for a fresh start through repentance and a new heart.

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## Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles to Psalm 51 for our scripture reading today. Psalm 51. I'll read the first and the odd-numbered verses.

We ask you to join together in the reading of the even. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the even verses. Let's stand as we read the word of God.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness, according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight, that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free spirit. And then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee. Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.

O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise. For Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou will not despise. Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion. Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem, and then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with the burnt offering, and the whole burnt offering.

And then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar. Let's pray. Lord, even as David, confessing his sin, came to You on the basis of Your mercy, so we too, Lord, say, have mercy upon us, O God.

According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out our transgressions. Lord, we pray that today You will help us to understand the relationship that You want us to have with You, that personal intimate relationship, where we stand before You as individuals, just as we are. Father, we do pray that You'll give us a good understanding of the grace and the mercies whereby we can find the cleansing and the forgiveness for our transgressions.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You may be seated.

Tonight we will be studying Ezekiel 18-20. We encourage you to join us tonight as we gather to worship the Lord and to go through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. We're looking forward to an exciting time in the study of the Word this evening and the work of God's Spirit in our lives as we gather together to serve the Lord.

This morning we'd like to draw your attention to the 18th chapter, verse 2, where the prophet Ezekiel declares, 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. There seems to be a great unwillingness for a person to take the responsibility for their own failures. If we happen to be successful, then we're willing to share our genius and our ingenuity and and tell people how we are so successful.

We can write our books on success, our bios. But when a person has failed, it's awfully hard for us to just confess, I was wrong. I think those are the three hardest words to say in the English language.

I was wrong. We seem to stumble over that. Hard to confess that it's my fault.

I was wrong. This goes way back, of course, to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, ate of that fruit. When God came into the garden to commune with them, they hid themselves from the presence of God.

God called out and said, Adam, where are you? And Adam said, We hid ourselves because we were naked. God said, Who told you you were naked? Did you eat of the tree that I told you not to eat? Adam said, Well, the woman that you gave to me to be my wife, she did tempt me and I did eat. In reality, God, it's your fault.

You're the one that gave me this woman. And she's the one that tempted me. And it's not my fault.

And of course, Eve said, Well, the devil made me do it. And so it is. We want to pass the buck.

We don't want to say, I have sinned. I am wrong. Hard to do.

This proverb is a proverb that was developed to pass the buck. Our fathers have eaten sour grapes, and our teeth are set on edge. It's my father's fault that we have failed.

It's our father's fault that we are going into captivity and don't want to take the blame. Don't want to acknowledge my own sin, my own failure. I want to blame someone else for the problems that I have.

But you say, isn't that a scriptural truth? Back in Exodus chapter 20 verse 4, does it not say, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them. For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and the fourth generation.

Isn't that what God said? He will visit the sins of the fathers unto their children to the third and the fourth generation. Read on. Don't stop there.

Many fallacies have come out of partial scriptures. It goes on to say, to the third and fourth generation of those who continue in the sin. Yes, if your fathers have sinned and you continue in their sin, that judgment will continue to the third and the fourth generations of those who continue in the sin.

This proverb of fathers eating sour grapes actually appears twice in the Bible. Both cases, it is declared to be a wrong proverb. It was evidently a proverb that was being used about the time that Judah was falling to Babylon.

There had already been two sieges. Many of the people had been carried off. And the people that were still left in Jerusalem, where Jeremiah was prophesying, they declared, well, the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge.

And Jeremiah is, in chapters 30 and 31, telling of a glorious day that was coming. Though the Babylonians were going to take them into captivity, though they were going to go through extremely hard times, yet the day was going to come when God would bring them back into the land, when once again the blessings of God would be upon them. And in those chapters, several times it says, and in those days, talking about the glory of those days when they are restored to divine favor.

And he said, and in those days they will no longer use the proverbs that the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. That proverb won't be used anymore because the children and the fathers are being blessed of the Lord as they are seeking the Lord there in the land. Now at the same time that Jeremiah was prophesying in Jerusalem, Ezekiel was prophesying to the captives in Babylon.

And those who were captive in Babylon were not wanting to take the responsibility for their sin that brought them into captivity. But they were there in Babylon using this proverb and they said, our fathers have eaten sour grapes and our teeth are set on edge. We are suffering as a result of the sins of our fathers.

It's their fault that the nation has fallen. It's their fault that we are here in captivity. But the Lord declares the inaccuracy of this proverb.

The Lord declares that every man is responsible for himself and that if you are, if your teeth are set on edge, it's because you have eaten the sour grapes. It's interesting how that proverb is quite popular today. Maybe not said just like that, but that endeavor to blame our problems on our parents or on someone else.

Like Adam, well the woman that you gave to be my wife, or the father that I had, or my upbringing and the dysfunctional family and so forth. And we're trying to blame what we are on something other than ourselves. The sociologists have a formula for personality.

It is H E plus T equals P. P being your personality. The H being heredity, the E being environment, and the T being time. Heredity, environment plus time equals personality.

In other words, you are what you are because of heredity and because of environment. Over a period of time, you've become what you are. So that in a sense it's, if your parents have eaten sour grapes, your teeth are set on edge.

It isn't really your fault, it's your heredity, it's your environment in which you grew up that has caused you to be dysfunctional yourself. The psychologists often try to blame a person's neurotic behavior upon their family upbringing. And a few years ago, it was a very popular thing among many of the psychologists, but an extremely dangerous thing, where they were trying to take people into an age regression and open up areas of the subconscious where things have been sublimated, the psychologists were saying, which were so horrible that you just close them out, you relegated them to the subconscious area, but that is your problem and you need to understand what had happened and you need to go back and to relive these experiences.

And so all kinds of horrible things were being brought out. You can't remember them, but through the therapy you can divulge the abuses that you had when you were too small to even remember, or abuses that have been sublimated and now you are suffering as a result of these abuses. And it destroyed so many families where they were saying, well, your father was sexually abusing you when you were in the crib and this kind of horrible kind of stuff, and people were buying into that, but oh, the damage it was doing into so many homes, innocent fathers being turned on by their children because of these supposed activities that took place when they were too young to really remember them.

Your parents have eaten sour grapes and your teeth are set on edge. Today, so often in a trial in court where a person has been adjudged guilty, when it comes to the sentencing of that person, the defense attorney will often bring in a psychologist who will share with the court the dysfunctional family in which you were raised, the abuse that you were subjected to when you were a child, and they are trying to gain leniency from the court because your fathers ate sour grapes. And so you have committed these crimes, done these horrible things, but it really isn't you.

You're a victim of your heredity and a victim of your environment, and they hope to get leniency from the court in the sentencing aspect of the trial because the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. God had an answer to this proverb. God said, all souls are mine.

The souls of the fathers and the souls of their offspring. Each person will answer to God for himself. God will hold your fathers responsible for what they have done, but God will hold you responsible for what you have done.

God will not hold you responsible for what your fathers have done. Neither will God hold your fathers responsible for what you have done. All souls are mine.

Everyone will answer for himself before God. You will give an answer for what you are and for what you have done. Possible that you had a horrible environment growing up.

Possible that your heredity is bad. That you're a descendant of Jesse James or something, but it doesn't matter. God, when you stand before him, will be judging you for what you have done.

It is possible for a person to rise above their heredity, above their environment. You don't have to stay in that same pattern of your parents. If they were evil, it's possible for you to rise above it through the help of God and the transforming power of God's spirit.

God said, the soul that sinneth, it shall die. All souls are mine. Now the Lord, three times in this chapter, gives a list of things that should be done.

Things that weren't being done, but should have been done. And so he gives basically the same list three times over in showing how that the father's eating sour grapes doesn't necessarily affect the children. If a man is just, God said, these are the things that he will do and won't do.

He does that which is lawful and right. He has not sacrificed to the false gods. He has not worshipped the idols.

He has not committed adultery. He's not charged undue interest or usury on money which he has lent. He has withdrawn himself from iniquity.

He has been fair in his judgment. He has walked in the statutes of the Lord. He has kept God's judgments.

He shall surely live, saith the Lord God. These are the traits and activities of a righteous man. But if this man's son does the opposite, if he is a robber, a murderer, if he does things that his father did not do, if he serves the false gods, if he worships the idols of the pagans, if he commits adultery, if he has done these things, then he shall surely die.

His blood, God said, will be upon him. But if the son of that wicked man who sees all of the sins that his father did and considers the bitter fruit that it has brought in his dad's life and he turns from those evil things and he, third time the list, does the good things again, then he shall live. For every man stands before God for himself.

It's possible that a righteous father have a wicked son. It's possible that a wicked father have a righteous son. I like that phrase, and he considers.

This young man sees his dad. He sees him as an alcoholic. He sees his life being destroyed.

He sees the evil. He sees the abuse that he's brought into the family. And he says, I'm not going to live like that.

There's got to be a better way. There's got to be a better life. And he seeks and he lives a better life.

He will not be punished because of what his dad was. He can come to a better life. He can experience a better life.

He doesn't have to follow that. But if a boy grows up in a good home and there's everything there because the father is a righteous man and he does that which is good and it's a good loving home but yet he turns from it. He gets into bad company.

He goes out and lives a sinful life. Then he will be judged for his sin. He won't be able to ride on his father's righteousness into the kingdom of heaven.

In verse 20, The soul that sins 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. Every man answers only for himself when he stands before God.

It's interesting that as you look at the kings of Judah you have that very thing happening. Hezekiah was a very good king. He had a son Manasseh who was probably the most wicked king ever to reign.

Manasseh had a wicked son Ammon but Ammon had a very righteous son Josiah. And Josiah had a very wicked son so that you don't pass on righteousness or wickedness. It's something that each person chooses for himself whether he will live a righteous life before God or whether he will live in wickedness.

But for the wicked God offers forgiveness. In verse 21. But if the wicked will turn from all of his sins that he has committed and keep my statutes and do that which is lawful and right he shall surely live.

He shall not die. All his transgressions that he has committed shall not be mentioned unto him in his righteousness that he has done he shall live. That's the gospel.

Though a person is wicked has done many evil things if he will turn to the Lord the Lord will forgive. The Lord will cleanse. And all of the evil, the wickedness that they have done will never be remembered.

Never be brought up. It's buried. It's passed.

It's gone. What a glorious gospel we have. God will wipe the slate totally clean for those that will come in repentance to him.

In verse 27 however again. When a 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 considers and turns away from all his transgression that he has committed he shall surely live. He shall not die.

Again that idea of considering. How important it is for us to consider the consequences of living in wickedness. In Isaiah chapter 1 God said come let's reason together saith the Lord.

Though your sins are as scarlet you can be as white as snow. There in chapter 1 he tells of all of the distress all of the problems that the people have brought upon themselves because of their wickedness. Consider Consider what evil has brought into your life the hurt, the pain, the suffering that has resulted from the wickedness in your life because he considers.

It's important to consider. I believe that anyone will just stop and consider that you'll realize that living a righteous life pays such wonderful dividends not only now but for eternity. Think of how many people you know whose lives have been ruined by sin.

Actually we go on to read there in the 20th chapter. Therefore I will judge you O house of Israel everyone according to his ways saith the Lord repent and turn from all your transgressions so iniquity will not be your ruin. To continue it will destroy you and all of us can think of friends of people that we know whose lives we have observed whose lives have been ruined completely ruined because of their wickedness because of their sin.

So God is saying consider these things. Turn turn to God, repent before sin destroys you. It's your ruin.

God declares that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Verse 23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die saith the Lord God and not that they should return from his evil ways and live? God warned there in verse 24 But if a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does according to all of the abominations that the wicked man does shall he live? All of his righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned in his trespass that he has trespassed and in his sin that he has sinned he shall die. In other words even as God will blot out all of your sins when you repent and come to him the past is blotted out.

So if you have lived a good life but you decide I'm going to forsake this life of righteousness I'm going to go out and live in sin I'm going to commit iniquities then even as God has forgotten all of the sins of the sinner so will God forget all of the righteous deeds of the righteous and God said you will die in your sin. And so God called verse 31 and 32 Cast away from you all of your transgressions whereby you have transgressed and make you a new heart a new spirit for why will you die O house of Israel for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies saith the Lord God wherefore turn and live.

God's invitation almost pleading with you why will you die why go on in the path of destruction why destroy and ruin your life turn to me God said I'll give you a new spirit a new heart I'll forgive it's interesting the psalm that we read this morning David was not using the proverb oh it's my parents fault but he was acknowledging directly to God I'm at fault I have sinned have mercy upon me O God according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this iniquity in thy sight the confession of his sin but then as he went on to pray create in me a clean heart renew a right spirit in me take not thy Holy Spirit from me he's asking now for God's forgiveness for God's cleansing on the basis of God's mercy he's asking that God would give him a clean heart wash him cleanse me purge me with his and I shall be clean renew Lord a right spirit in me take not your Holy Spirit from me God heard David's prayer David was restored he didn't try to hide behind problems in childhood or anything of that nature he confessed I am guilty I have sinned O God you're merciful forgive me cleanse me give me a clean slate purge me with his and it was so and so it can be so for you today he is the same God who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked he is the same God that can renew a right spirit in you the same God who can cleanse you from all unrighteousness and forgive and forget all of the past evil that you may have ever done wash me and I shall be whiter than snow and if you will pray that God will do that for you Father we thank you for this glorious salvation that we have in and through our Lord Jesus Christ and though our sins were as scarlet yet Lord you've made us white as snow Lord there are those here today been trying to throw the blame for what they are on something else or someone else rather than just acknowledging I am a sinner I am guilty before God Lord we pray that you'll help them this day to just face up to the fact that they are what they are because of their choices and if they've made bad choices then they are being ruined by the consequences of those choices help them Lord to make a good choice today a choice of coming to you seeking your pardon seeking your forgiveness seeking the cleansing of their lives by the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for our sins that you might forgive them that you might cleanse them that you might blot out all of the past records against them and that they

might live with you in your eternal kingdom of righteousness world without end in Jesus name we pray  
Amen

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