

## Turn and Live. Ezekiel 18.

We encounter lots of warnings in life and there is

Nothing wrong and everything right in giving warning of real dangers

Some, especially where act and consequence are close, we obey. Very few of us play in electricity substations or make a habit of drinking labelled poisons.

But others, especially where there is gap between behaviour and consequence, and especially where we are being warned against something we want to do, we enjoy doing, we find harder to heed. We may even find reasons not to act on the warning.

Take smoking. The health risks of smoking are legion and well known. They are even advertised on cigarette packets. Go to the department of health website and it will tell you

- **Cancer**  
Smoking causes most [lung cancers](#) and can cause cancer almost anywhere on the body. This includes the lips, tongue, mouth, nose, oesophagus, throat, voice box, stomach, liver, kidney, pancreas, bladder, blood, cervix, vulva, penis and anus.
- **Breathing problems and chronic respiratory conditions**  
Smoking is the main cause of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease ([COPD](#)), a serious, progressive and disabling condition that limits airflow in the lungs. Active smoking also worsens asthma in active smokers and is associated with an increased risk for asthma in adolescents and adults.
- **Heart disease, stroke and blood circulation problems**  
Smoking is major cause of cardiovascular disease, such as heart disease and stroke. Smoking increases the risk of blood clots, which block blood flow to the heart, brain or legs. Some smokers end up having their limbs amputated due to blood circulation problems caused by smoking.
- **Diabetes**  
Smoking causes [type 2 diabetes](#), with the risk of developing diabetes 30 to 40% higher for active smokers than non-smokers. Smoking may also worsen some of the health conditions related to [type 1 diabetes](#), such as kidney disease.
- **Infections**  
Smoking weakens your immune system so you're more likely to get [bacterial and viral infections](#).

- **Dental problems**  
Smoking increase the risk of [gum diseases](#), tooth loss and tooth sensitivity. Once a person has gum damage, smoking also makes it harder for their gums to heal.
- **Hearing loss**  
Smoking reduces blood flow to the inner ear. Smokers may also [lose their hearing](#) earlier than a non-smoker.
- **Vision loss**  
Smoking damages the eye and can lead to [macular degeneration](#) — the main cause of blindness in Australia.
- **Fertility problems**  
Smoking can make it more difficult to fall pregnant and affect sperm quality. Find out more about [smoking and tobacco and pregnancy](#).
- **Osteoporosis and menopause**  
Smoking is a risk factor for osteoporosis and in women, may result in early menopause compared to a non-smoker.

Yet people still take up and continue smoking. And they have reasons for not heeding the clear warnings about the health risks of smoking.

My grandfather smoked a packet a day and live to be 86

I'm fit and well. It hasn't done me any harm

I like it

It is too hard to stop – and it can be hard because it is physically and psychologically addictive, but there is help with that

Smokers find reasons to not change behaviour in the face of clear warnings of its danger.

Throughout Ezekiel, whom the LORD appointed as a watchman, someone whose role it is to give warning of approaching danger, the LORD is giving warnings to the Jewish exiles in Babylon, warnings of judgment on sin, warnings supported by the LORD's description of what was happening and would happen to Jerusalem

The purpose of those warnings, like the purpose of most warnings, was to prevent harm, to preserve life.

Here in Ezekiel 18 God through Ezekiel is again warning the exiles to change their behaviour in light of coming judgment

*Ezekiel 18:*<sup>30</sup> *“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin.*

And the purpose of the warning is clear – that the Israelites would live and not die

*Ezekiel 18:*<sup>31</sup> *Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?*<sup>32</sup> *For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.*

But the people were finding reasons not to act on God’s warning. We heard one of them in v. 2 - ***‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’?***, a common proverb quoted also we know from Jeremiah by the people of Jerusalem [Jeremiah 31:29-30]

*Ezekiel 18: The word of the LORD came to me:*<sup>2</sup> *“What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’?”*<sup>3</sup> *As I live, declares the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel.*

Might sound a bit cryptic and We are going to unpack this excuse not to act in a moment, for it is one still made today, although in different terms.

But before we do, so we don’t miss the wood for the trees, pause and think of

The wonder of the God who warns

And

The wonder of what is offered to those who heed the warning

The wonder of the God who warns.

We have this chapter because having given repeated clear warnings, shown the danger they faced if they continued their rebellion to be real, shown it to be the outcome of their present behaviour

The LORD now reasons with the exiles to persuade them to act on those warnings

He doesn’t force them

He doesn’t walk away from them, fed up with their foolish stubbornness

He, the Creator of the universe, the source of their and our every breath, patiently addresses their arguments for not doing anything, even their criticism of Him v. 25.

And He urges them, entreats them to change and live

In chapter 16 it was amazing to realise that the holy God humbled Himself to speak the language of the gutter to speak to those in the gutter to help them see the seriousness of their sin.

Here again we see His gracious humility, reasoning with Israel like a parent with a stubborn four year old

And He does this not to win an argument, but to win to life people who deserve death

Some people think that because God warns very clearly of His just anger at their sin because He is somehow down on them, anti them, can't wait to wallop them. Nothing could be further from the truth

Those Warnings, those declarations of certain judgment, are given because HE is for them, for life, wanting their good

If you are partying on the dance floor and the policewoman comes in and says you must leave the floor immediately because they've had a tip off about a bomb in the building – you don't think kill joy. You think she has spoken to save your life.

God speaks for life and in Ezekiel 18 we should recognise the wonder of the life offered repeatedly to those who heed the warning [v. 9, 17, 19, 22, 23, 27, 28, 32]

This Life starts being mentioned in a court room context v. 9 – it is the life the righteous will receive when brought to judgment and measured against the standard of God's law

So this life is not just being spared death, which is the sentence on law breakers

It is life in the covenant, in a committed and enduring relationship with the LORD

This is life which enjoys peace with God – shalom, enjoys His care and protection

As the book goes on this life is revealed as new life ch. 36, where people are enabled by God's Spirit to live with God

Resurrection life, ch. 37

Life under the LORD's protection free from any fear ch. 38-39.

In the end it is life in the new heaven and earth, life without death

This is the alternative the LORD is offering to those who will heed His warning, the alternative to the death they deserve in the judgment.

So what is the reason the exiles give for not engaging with what Ezekiel is preaching, not responding to the LORD's call

Already in exile they didn't have the option of saying it was not real or serious

And they didn't really doubt his existence, though they might have doubts about His power

And Neither should you doubt the existence of the God who speaks

Plainly if you think the LORD is an imaginary God you won't pay attention.

But in the face of the evidence that dismissal looks too convenient.

What evidence?

Evidence of creation, an information rich creation. That information did not come about randomly. The universal constants set the parameters for what is, they are not produced by it

The fulfilment of prophecy in Jewish history – for example the fulfillment of Ezekiel and Jeremiah's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians

The ministry and resurrection of Jesus, the subsequent growth of His church

The experience of believers

There are lots of reasons to believe

But Ezekiel's audience do believe, so why are they not responding?

<sup>2</sup> *“What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge’?”*

<sup>3</sup> *As I live, declares the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel.*

They are saying We are in this mess, not because of what we have done, but because of what previous generations have done.

We are living with the consequences of the actions of others, not our own actions.

Two ways this can be understood

Firstly, A fatalistic way.

We are not to blame, but what can you do.

This is just the way the universe works

Our lives are determined by the actions of others, by where we find ourselves in the flow of history.

It's the fault of our parents, or our genes, or our education – for which our parents are responsible

Ezekiel, you can preach until you are blue in the face, but we didn't create the present circumstance, and we can't change it, can't change our fate

The other way of taking it is as a way of suggesting the LORD is unfair in judging them, that they are lumbered with a judgment that the previous generation provoked.

It wasn't us but them, and you shouldn't be punishing us

There may well be some of that alleging unfairness to God, but verse 19 suggests that they accept that children should suffer for the acts of their parents

*Ezekiel 18:<sup>19</sup> "Yet you say, 'Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?'"*

Either way – this saying is a way of avoiding responsibility for what has happened, and avoiding responsibility for acting now, in the present, an excuse for doing nothing because there is nothing you can do.

It is quite modern. We are not to blame. We are caught up in a system of inexorable cause and effect. Even our thinking and choices are the product of

electro chemical processes, and we are just products of random material forces. Nothing we do will change things.

What can we say to that? Haven't they got some justification for blaming the parents?

As a general observation the decisions of parents do effect their children's lives.

Your parents decide to move to Melbourne, and you grow up in Melbourne

Your dad is a drunkard and a gambling addict, and you grow up poor

IN the second commandment, speaking in relation to idolatry, doesn't it say that God will visit *the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me*, Exodus 20:4-6

*Exodus 20:<sup>4</sup> "You shall not make for yourself a carved 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. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting <sup>6</sup> but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

*[Exodus 34:<sup>6</sup> The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." ]*

Hasn't Ezekiel himself contributed to this view outlining in chapter 16 how the actions of previous generations have brought Israel to this point.

But the Lord's response v. 4 is vigorous.

*Ezekiel 18:<sup>4</sup> Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.*

People aren't judged and condemned for the sins of others, for the sins of their parents. They are judged for their own sins.

And the LORD makes clear the basis for individual responsibility. Each person owes their life to God – all souls, all lives, are mine; and each person is accountable to the LORD

He is the Creator, and He is the Judge of each person.

So how does that relate to Exodus 20. The third and fourth generation describes an Israelite household. All members of the household are caught up in the idolatry of the head, and share in the consequences of that unless they separate themselves from it.

But judgment under the law has always been individual

Deut 24:16

*Deuteronomy 24:16* "Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin.

We see both in our own society. If someone's parent is a drug dealer there will be consequences for them – whether it is living with fear of authority, or suffering disruption of family life and deprivation if the parent is arrested.

But they won't be charged and sent to jail by the courts. People are judged for their own crimes.

And the LORD has been talking about judgment

And He tells a three generational story to illustrate the truth of what He has said - that people are judged according to what each individual has done

There is a grandfather, a son/father and a son/grandson

The first generation is righteous v. 9 – He lives

*Ezekiel 18:5* "If a man is righteous and does what is just and right— <sup>6</sup> if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman in her time of menstrual impurity, <sup>7</sup> does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, <sup>8</sup> does not lend at interest or take any profit, withholds his hand from injustice, executes true justice between man and man, <sup>9</sup> walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the Lord God.



Righteousness is living according to the standards of the covenant – conforming to the expected and agreed norms of the relationship between God and His people

We see here Righteousness is attractive

And most of it deals with our relationship to others – how we treat them in all areas of life, especially those less powerful than ourselves

This is the kind of person you would want for your neighbour

But he has a son and this son does the exact opposite of his father.

*Ezekiel 18:<sup>10</sup> "If he fathers a son who is violent, a shedder of blood, who does any of these things <sup>11</sup> (though he himself did none of these things), who even eats upon the mountains, defiles his neighbor's wife, <sup>12</sup> oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore the pledge, lifts up his eyes to the idols, commits abomination, <sup>13</sup> lends at interest, and takes profit; shall he then live? He shall not live. He has done all these abominations; **he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself.***

No one is arguing that he should be spared because his father was righteous

Verdict is clear v. 13 – and he is responsible for his own destruction

And then he has a son.

He makes a choice v. 14

*Ezekiel 18:<sup>14</sup> "Now suppose this man fathers a son **who sees all the sins that his father has done; he sees, and does not do likewise:** <sup>15</sup> he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife, <sup>16</sup> does not oppress anyone, exacts no pledge, commits no robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, <sup>17</sup> withholds his hand from iniquity, takes no interest or profit, **obeys my rules, and walks in my statutes; he shall not die for his father's iniquity; he shall surely live.** <sup>18</sup> As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother, and did what is not good among his people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity.*

A different decision, a different life, a different verdict v. 17

Clear – the soul who sins will die, and that is righteous, God acting according to the covenant.

*Ezekiel 18:<sup>19</sup> “Yet you say, ‘Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?’ When the son has done what is just and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live.<sup>20</sup> The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.*

But there is an objections v. 19. You say

“Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father”

This continuing objection is a desperate attempt to avoid responsibility for acting, for accepting responsibility for themselves before God’s judgment, and shows the emptiness of their excuse.

You really want the son who does the right thing to suffer!

And the Son probably has suffered with a father like that, but what is at issue is not the context and societal consequences of his upbringing, but the judgment of God, and God is clear. He will not be judged for his father’s sins.

He will receive what his own behaviour deserves.

*When the son has done what is just and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live.*

The LORD repeats and emphasises the point.

*<sup>20</sup> The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.*

Each of us, individually, is responsible for what happens to us in God’s judgment.

God is not overwhelmed by numbers – he deals with each of us individually.

Our standing in that judgment is not determined by the actions of others, but by our own.

And our behaviour is not determined

Like the second and third persons in the story, a not uncommon story of children choosing differently from their parents,

We have a choice, and we are responsible

We can't blame others for where we stand in God's judgment

We can't excuse ourselves

Or deny that in God's treatment of us He acts justly in giving us what our actions deserve

We are responsible.

On the one hand that is liberating – we have real choice, but on the other, when they looked at their lives, when we look at our lives, it could leave us without hope. We, no one else, are responsible for our actions.

So now the LORD says that just as where we stand in the judgment is not determined by the actions of others – of our parents, our culture

Where we stand in the judgment need not be determined by our past.

*Ezekiel 18:<sup>21</sup> "But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. <sup>22</sup> None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live. <sup>23</sup> Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? <sup>24</sup> But when a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice and does the same abominations that the wicked person does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds that he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, for them he shall die.*

There is a way to life even for those who know that they have done wrong

In fact God speaks v. 21 of a 'wicked person'.

So we should be in no doubt about this person's status.

Like the wicked son of vv. 10-13 this is a person who deserves death

Think about that.

God is talking about hope for the wicked, those who have practiced disregarding God, doing the exact opposite of what He commands to please themselves

Is that you?

Have you been thinking there was no hope for you when you meet God?

vv. 21-22 say There is hope if you will repent – and we have a picture of repentance here

*Ezekiel 18:<sup>21</sup> “But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. <sup>22</sup> None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live.*

Repentance is Turning away from sin,

And Keeping – the repentant person turns back to confess the LORD is king, and commits to doing His will.

Repentance shows in changed behaviour.

And repentance keeps on living in that relationship – doing what is just and right

Repentance is doing a U turn, changing the direction of your life from pleasing yourself to pleasing God

What does God do for that person who repents. They will live

And v. 22 their sins will Not be remembered – not called to mind to be punished

They will live

Why?

*<sup>23</sup> Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?*

Because of who the LORD is.

He is someone who is merciful and gracious

Who is for life, not death. Death gives Him no pleasure. Rather, as Jesus taught, He has joy in sinners who repent

But they don't live because they have earned forgiveness by their repentance

They don't live because they have put God in their debt.

The wicked person who repents is saved by relying on the LORD to be who He has said He is. Salvation is saved by faith, not by their own work

But just as the wicked can change, so can the righteous.

*Ezekiel 18: <sup>24</sup> But when a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice and does the same abominations that the wicked person does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds that he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, for them he shall die.*

There is a warning against complacency here.

But it is more. It is a warning against thinking we can save ourselves by our own works

The complacent person puts their trust in themselves and what they have done.

This person thinks that because of their past good deeds, or some decision they may have made, they will be ok. They have bought God's favour, put God in their debt by what they have done, and so can take God for granted and get on doing whatever they like, living to please themselves – and the outcome is death

Two ways here

One is the way of life, the other is the way of death.

And to help you see the difference ask – where is each person's trust placed?

The person who turns back to God, the person who lives, is putting their faith in God.

They are not even putting their faith in their own repentance But in the LORD to be merciful, and then they are living a life of repentance and faith in the LORD.

Their trust is in the LORD, not in themselves.

The person who dies is putting their faith in themselves, in their own deeds. There is no repentance and faith there, and no relationship with the LORD

Where are you putting your faith to find life on the day of judgment?

Only one way leads to life.

But that there is life for the wicked who repent is great good news

Your own past rebellion need not determine where you stand with God, whether you can find life in relationship with your Creator, life now and forever

And that is because of who the LORD is

He does not change. He still desires life

So You can choose even now to turn back to the living and just God

But there is an objection.

*Ezekiel 18:<sup>25</sup> “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?<sup>26</sup> When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die.<sup>27</sup> Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life.<sup>28</sup> Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.<sup>29</sup> Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?*

‘The way of the Lord is not just’.

Just here is not the word that is also used for righteous. It has more the sense of correct, in order, so they are suggesting that the LORD’s action is inconsistent, arbitrary, lacking in principle.

On the one hand you say you will judge the wicked, and on the other that the wicked person who turns back - their sins won’t be remembered

This objection suggests that deep down they see themselves as basically righteous, and is still another way of avoiding responsibility for their own judgment by suggesting that it really doesn’t matter how you live.

But the LORD is clear

People v. 26 die for their own sin. No one else is to blame.

<sup>27</sup> *Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. <sup>28</sup> Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. <sup>29</sup> Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?*

People live vv. 27-28 because of God's mercy, a mercy they come to know through repentance and faith.

This is not arbitrary or unjust. This is exactly what the LORD had said he would do

At the end of the covenant renewal in Deuteronomy, after Moses had been through the consequences of breaking the covenant, the LORD says

***Deuteronomy 30: "And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, <sup>2</sup> and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>3</sup> then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.***

God had always promised mercy to those who repent

This is entirely consistent with His character, revealed in Exodus 34 when Israel had sinned in worshipping the golden calf

*Psalm 145:<sup>8</sup> The LORD is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

*<sup>9</sup> The LORD is good to all,  
and his mercy is over all that he has made.*

He shows mercy because He is merciful.

But perhaps you sense a deeper inconsistency

How can God who is committed to upholding justice be merciful to those who deserve punishment

How can this God who is on the side of life bring life to those who deserve death?

The answer has to wait for Jesus, God with us. But in Jesus we see the full extent of God's commitment to life. In the context of God again appealing to sinners to come and find peace with Him the apostle Paul says

*2 Corinthians 5:<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.<sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

He is talking of Jesus and His death on the cross. There, though Jesus was innocent, He died in the place of sinners. He was made a sacrifice for sin, taking the punishment we deserve, so that in Him we could be reckoned righteous, hear upon our lives the verdict Jesus deserved to hear on His. He has kept all my law, He is righteous, He lives.

God so wanted to give sinners life that He gave His Son in death in our place.

God is not arbitrary, not unjust, in giving mercy to those who repent.

It is their way that does not make sense, is not correct.

Their refusal to act and turn from their sin

Their refusal to heed the warning

And so the LORD comes to His final appeal

*Ezekiel 18:<sup>30</sup> "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin.<sup>31</sup> Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?<sup>32</sup> For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live."*

God makes it clear v. 30 Every individual will be judged for their own deeds.

You can't blame others for the outcome of your judgment



the LORD who judges knows all the circumstances of your life, all your thoughts, all your motivation.

Knows all the ways others might have sinned against you, just as He knows all your sin.

It will be just. God will treat you as your deeds deserve.

And God knows He is speaking to those who deserve death, whether speaking to the Israelites or to us this morning/evening, yet even as He declares the certainty of judgment He calls us to repent, to turn back to Him and find life

The LORD presents you with a Choice

Trust in yourself, your own goodness

Or turn back and trust in His mercy

And in the call to make a new heart and new spirit He

Makes clear that repentance starts in the will, it is not just some change in external behaviour, an outward conformity to moral standards

So it starts with confessing God as our rightful King in the willing, thinking core of your being, saying that from now on God's Son, the Lord Jesus directs my life

And He appeals to them to trust Him

To trust that He is the God who is for life, and wants to give them life

*Why will you die, O house of Israel? <sup>32</sup> For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live."*

It is an impassioned plea

The God who rightly exposes your sin, speaks of the just judgment your sin deserves, wants you to live.

Do you believe that?

Don't think that is something God only speaks to Jews in Exile in Babylon in about 590 BC

He speaks it now in the gospel of His Son

After speaking of Jesus death the apostle continued

*6 Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.<sup>2</sup> For he says,*

*“In a favorable time I listened to you,  
and in a day of salvation I have helped you.”*

*Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

God is still appealing to you

Why will you die?

If you die, if you are eternally condemned in God’s just judgment it will be because of your decision, your decision not to listen to the gracious, merciful God

I have been told from time to time that I should not speak so bluntly of sin and judgment - rude, negative

Especially now

Had to ask. Why does that find no emotional traction with me?

Is it because I am unfeeling, unsympathetic

Is it because I am doggedly but cheerlessly faithful to the text – which clearly speaks of sin and judgment.

No it is because God brought me to life through conviction of judgment. I can remember as an 11 year old knowing God would judge me and that I deserved condemnation, the hell of eternal separation from Him. But the same word of God that brought me conviction of that also told me He would forgive me if I turned back to Him, and I found there is nothing better, nothing more comforting, nothing that gives your greater confidence in the present, nothing that gives you a surer hope than being a sinner reconciled to the living God through the death of His Son.

In bringing me to life I know that God speaks these hard words of judgment, speaks them clearly and repeatedly

Because HE is merciful and gracious to sinners, to undeserving people, to stubborn rebels

Because He is for life

He has Shown that in giving His Son to give life

So if you have not yet turned to God

Know you will come into judgment

Give up your excuses for not listening to His warning

Accept responsibility for your sin, for your deserving condemnation

No one forced you to lie or steal or lust, to speak cruelly, to contemptuous rejection of God.

You did it because you willed to do it

So Stop blaming others, or blaming God

And Hear Him say “Why will you die’

Hear Him call you to turn back and find peace with Him by trusting Him, trusting that He has given His son in death to give you life

Call out to Him, and let us know

Believer

Delight in your good, just and merciful God. The almighty who stoops to persuade, who is so generous, so determined to give life that He gives the life of His beloved Son in death to save

And don't be embarrassed into not speaking of judgment

Don't believe the lie that you are somehow doing people a disservice by warning them of it, or judging them, or being unsympathetic to their situation

You are speaking, like our God who speaks of judgment, to give them life through repentance and faith in the King, the LORD Jesus, and that life is wonderful

Be like Him – argue with their unbelief, persuade, patiently

Say ‘Why would you die?’ and mean it, be passionate in your appeal

Knowing that death certainly awaits all sinners,

But God is for life, and will certainly show mercy to all who turn back to Him.

“AIHW In 2019, adolescents aged 14–17 and young adults aged 18–24 were more likely to have never smoked than any other age group (97% and 80%, respectively). This proportion remained fairly stable since 2016 (96% and 79%, respectively) and represents an increase in the proportion of adolescents and young adults who never smoked since 2001 (82% and 58%, respectively). Of the young adults aged 18–24, nearly 8 in 10 (77%) men reported they never

smoked in 2019; this has remained stable since 2013 (76%) but has increased since 2001 (56%). More than 8 in 10 (83%) women aged 18–24 reported in 2019 that they had never smoked, an increase from 59% in 2001 and similar to 2016 (79%) (AIHW 2020a).

### **Age and sex**

In 2019, among those aged 18 and over, men were more likely than women to smoke daily (12.8% compared with 10.4%). The proportion of women who smoke daily has remained stable between 2016 and 2019 (11.2% compared with 10.4%), while the proportion of men who smoke daily has decreased from 14.6% in 2016 to 12.8% in 2019. The greatest difference between the sexes was among 40–49 year olds, with more men (18.4%) smoking daily than women (13.4%) in 2019 (Figure 2)."