

# POWER HOUR

3/8/2026

Lesson Text:  
Ezekiel 33:12-20

Background Scripture:  
Ezekiel 18:1-32

Devotional Reading:  
Isaiah 57:11-13, Romans 3:1-20 &  
Matthew 3:1-10; 21:28-32

“THE WAY OF THE LORD IS JUST”

NLT TRANSLATION

**Golden Text:** Your people are saying, ‘The Lord isn’t doing what’s right,’ but it is they who are not doing what’s right. Ezekiel 33:17 NLT

**Time:** between 593 and 571 B.C.

**Place:** Babylon

## Ezekiel 33:12-20 NLT

**12** “Son of man, give your people this message: The righteous behavior of righteous people will not save them if they turn to sin, nor will the wicked behavior of wicked people destroy them if they repent and turn from their sins. **13** When I tell righteous people that they will live, but then they sin, expecting their past righteousness to save them, then none of their righteous acts will be remembered. I will destroy them for their sins. **14** And suppose I tell some wicked people that they will surely die, but then they turn from their sins and do what is just and right. **15** For instance, they might give back a debtor’s security, return what they have stolen, and obey my life-giving laws, no longer doing what is evil. If they do this, then they will surely live and not die. **16** None of their past sins will be brought up again, for they have done what is just and right, and they will surely live. **17** “Your people are saying, ‘The Lord isn’t doing what’s right,’ but it is they who are not doing what’s right. **18** For again I say, when righteous people turn away from their righteous behavior and turn to evil, they will die. **19** But if wicked people turn from their wickedness and do what is just and right, they will live. **20** O people of Israel, you are saying, ‘The Lord isn’t doing what’s right.’ But I judge each of you according to your deeds.”

## INTRODUCTION

Ezekiel 33 marks the end of Ezekiel's mission before the fall of Jerusalem. Although he would continue his prophetic career for at least another sixteen years, his tone and purpose shifted from warning to hope. Chapter 33 recalls the start of his mission. Verses 1-9 repeat his prophetic calling from 3:16-21 when God called Ezekiel to be a watchman for His people. In these bookend passages (chaps. 3; 33), the Lord detailed the obligations associated with Ezekiel's call. If a watchman saw an army approach his city and warned its people, he was innocent of the bloodshed that might follow. The inhabitants would be responsible for their failure to respond (33:5). But if the watchman saw the army and failed to warn the city, he was guilty of their deaths (vs. 6). So it was for Ezekiel and his prophetic mission. Ezekiel knew that destruction was near. He was responsible for warning his fellow exiles, even if they would not listen. Ezekiel's final message addressed the faulty thinking of his contemporaries. Individuals were judged according to their own actions.

**1. The fall of the righteous (Ezekiel 33:12-14).** God presented the Israelites with a hypothetical situation. A person may have been righteous in the past, yet his past deeds do not save him later. If that person turned to sin, that person would die. That is hard for sinful humans to accept. We want our past virtuous deeds to cover a present "mistake." However, virtuous deeds cannot save anyone. All people are responsible for their sins and must face God's judgment.

The problem is that we do not have any righteousness apart from God's grace (Romans 3:10-20). No matter how hard we try, we fall into sin, and we are dependent on the mercy of God in Christ to justify us (vss. 23-24). Only those whose sins have been covered will experience eternal life. Christians cannot achieve spiritual maturity through works. God deals with Christians through grace. Christians should take heed, examine their motives, and depend on God's grace to help them grow (Galatians 3:3).

**2. The recovery of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:15-16).** God continued defending His justice by stating that if a wicked person turned from his wickedness, He would judge that person accordingly. He would not die but would live. That

type of justice is even harder for us to accept. We want God to punish the sins of others; though for our own sins, we crave mercy. Sadly, it bothers some Christians when someone evil turns to Christ. But every Christian was at one time dead in his or her trespasses and deserving of God's wrath. God provided the way to salvation in Christ (Romans 5:8-10).

**3. The justice of the Lord (Ezekiel 33:17-20).** God was not unjust; His people had been unjust. They walked in corruption and idolatry while pretending to follow the Lord. God warned that each person would be judged. God would have been in the right to instantly condemn the Israelites, yet He chose to give them a warning. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked but would rather that all repent (vss. 11; & chp.18:23). Our temptation is sometimes to downplay "ordinary" sin as trivial. However, all sin is grievous before God. He would have been just to condemn sin, yet He provided a way of salvation. God's judgment is coming, yet He delays so that more sinners will come to repentance (1 Peter 3:9).

## **PRACTICAL POINTS**

Christians cannot depend on past deeds to justify present evils (Ezekiel 33:12-13).

There are practical steps sinful people can take to separate themselves from past wickedness (vss. 14-15).

A sinful person can always turn away from wickedness and accept God's merciful gift (vs. 16).

When people fail to understand God's justice, they are in the wrong, not Him (vs. 17).

God is always ready to extend His grace to those who repent and seek Him (vss. 18-19).

Each person is judged according to his or her deeds (vs. 20)

## **CONCLUSION**

Ezekiel prophesied to the unjust and unrepentant people of Israel. Instead of examining their own hearts and ordering their own ways, they accused God of injustice. In response, God pointed out that His ways are just. The wicked person

would die in his wickedness, even if he had previously done honorable deeds. Likewise, the righteous person would live, even if he had previously done evil. Instead of blindly trusting in our good deeds to save us, we need to carefully examine our hearts. Have we strayed from God, using His grace as an excuse to walk in sin, or are we working out our salvation, living in the right fear of God and praising Him for His mercy to us in Christ?

### **QUESTION(S)**

1. What does Ezekiel 33:12 teach about judgment?
2. What choices did the Israelites have in Deuteronomy 30:15-18?
3. What hope did God offer to the wicked in Ezekiel 33:14-15?
4. How did the Mosaic Law protect borrowers from predatory lenders?
5. What was the Mosaic Law's remedy for theft?
6. What did Ezekiel add to his comments about the wicked dying and the righteous living???
7. What did the people claim was the basis of their standing with God?
8. What accusations did the Judahites make against God?
9. What did the saying about sour grapes and children's teeth mean?
10. What significant historical event occurred after the conclusion of Ezekiel's message in 33:12-20?

**Next week**, our lesson will cover how God's wrath has been revealed against all sin.

**“God’s Wrath Revealed” Romans 1:18-23**

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