

The LORD Is There

Session 7. The Soul That Sins

God bans the excuse, refuses the despair, and pleads with every soul: turn, and live.

What We Found

The exiles were quoting a proverb: the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. It sounded like theology, but it hid two lies at once, none of this is our fault, and nothing we do can matter. God banned it, and staked his claim over every one of us: behold, all souls are mine. No one relates to God only through their parents. Every soul stands before him directly.

We found that Ezekiel was standing on old ground. Deuteronomy 24:16 already forbade executing children for their fathers' sins, and Jeremiah, preaching in Jerusalem in the same period, banned the very same proverb and followed it with the promise of a new covenant written on hearts. Two prophets, two cities, one medicine.

Verses 21 to 24 broke the power of the past in both directions. The wicked man who turns will live, and his transgressions shall not be remembered against him. The righteous man who turns away cannot coast on his old record. Neither your worst chapter nor your best one is your destiny; God is watching the person you are turning into.

And twice, God opened his own heart. He takes no pleasure in the death of anyone. The chapter about judgment ends not with a gavel but with a plea: get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit; why will you die, O house of Israel? Turn, and live. Back in chapter 11 God promised to give that new heart himself. Tonight he commanded us to get one. Both are true, and the book has not yet told us how they meet. Keep watching.

Voices of the Church

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, d. 386

Preparing catechumens for baptism, St. Cyril teaches, in substance, that sin is the fruit of free choice, not something fixed in our nature or forced on us from outside; the devil can suggest, he insists, but he cannot compel. And he points to the great penitents of Scripture to prove the other half of the same truth: no one who turns back to God is refused.

Catechetical Lectures, Lecture 2 (On Repentance). Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. For anyone quietly thinking, this is just how I am, or, this is just how my family is, Cyril's answer is that no inherited wound, habit or family pattern makes personal sin necessary.

St. Augustine, d. 430

St. Augustine teaches, in substance, that the God who created us without our consent will not justify us without our consent. Creation asked nothing of us; salvation asks for our yes.

Sermon 169. Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. This is exactly the tension of verse 31 held together: God alone can give the new heart, and we must still turn.

St. Faustina Kowalska, d. 1938

Throughout her Diary, St. Faustina records Jesus insisting that his mercy is greater than any sin and that the greatest sinners have the first claim on it. The often-quoted assurance that he pursues the sinner to the last moment is not

pinned to a numbered entry here, so it is left aside.

Diary (Divine Mercy in My Soul). Summary of her teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. Ezekiel 18:23 and 18:32 anticipate the theme at the heart of the Divine Mercy devotion: God's settled desire is not anyone's death but everyone's turning.

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Write down one blame-script you tell yourself, a sentence that begins, I'm like this because. Then rewrite it as an Ezekiel 18 sentence about who you are choosing to become. Keep both where you will see them.
2. Make a concrete plan for confession this month: pick the parish, the day, and the time, and put it in your phone. If that feels far off, start tonight with a nightly examen that ends with verse 31 said aloud.
3. Pray verse 32 by name each day this week for one person you have quietly written off, including if that person is you.
4. Memorize Ezekiel 18:32 and say it once each morning.

Scripture Memory

Ezekiel 18:32

"For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord GOD; so turn, and live."

Ezekiel 18:32

Go Further in the Catechism

- **CCC 1847.** God created us without us, but he did not will to save us without us; mercy asks for our free response.
- **CCC 1037.** God predestines no one to hell, and the Church prays that no one be lost.
- **CCC 1430.** Real repentance is interior conversion of heart, not a fresh coat of outward religion.

Before next session. Read Ezekiel 20:1-44 before we meet again.