“The Wickedness Of The Wicked Shall Be Upon Himself”
Ezekiel 18:20-32

Introduction:

A. Ezekiel responds to a false proverb. (vv. 1-3).
   1. Caused Israel to blame fathers and even God for their sins. (vv. 19,25,29).
   2. Encouraged two obstacles to repentance: self-pity and self-justification.

B. Ezekiel points out two fundamental facts of life:
   1. Each responsible for his own spiritual condition.
   2. Each will be judged by his present spiritual condition.

C. Ezekiel gave sinners but two choices. (vv. 30-32)
   1. Repent of sins and live!
   2. Remain in sins and die!

D. Ezekiel condemns modern approaches to crime, anti-social behavior, and sin.
   1. The Calvinistic approach: Imputation of sin and righteousness.
   2. The Liberal Sociological approach:
      a. Makes criminals and sinners victims rather than holding them accountable.
      b. Assumes something or somebody “made you do it”.
      c. Anything to keep but personal accountability and responsibility.
      d. Has resulted in increased crime rate in society and corrupted churches.

E. Let us look at four popular approaches taken by these liberal sociologists and brethren influenced by them:

Discussion:

I. The Decriminalization Approach.
   A. It reduces crime by legalizing it.
      1. If controlling an evil in society becomes too difficult — decriminalize it.
      2. If controlling sin in the church is difficult to identify and control - “grey area” it.
   B. It makes law responsible for sin rather than the sinner. (cf. Rom. 7:7-12).

II. The Distribution Approach.
   A. It automatically assumes that one's guilt must be shared by others - “look what you made me do.”
      1. A crime is committed — Victim, police, and society must share blame.
      2. A man takes us with secretary — Wife and home must share blame.
      3. A kid terrorizes school — teachers, peers, and school share blame.
   B. It places all imperfections and mistakes on same level.
      1. Any mistake of police, victim, or society removes right to prosecute.
      2. Any mistake of parents removes their right to punish.
      3. Any mistake of brethren removes their right to correct and rebuke.
   C. It discourages all parties from accepting and facing their respective responsibilities.
      1. Sinner feels little or no need to repent if others are responsible.
      2. Leaves no one qualified to correct or punish since all are responsible.
      3. The results: society and the church suffers from crime and sin out of control.

III. The Deprivation Approach.
   A. It assumes sin caused by being deprived — not depraved — not really sinner's fault.
      1. Murderers, rapist, drunkenness do it because are or were unloved.
      2. Thief steals because deprived of prosperity of his neighbors.
      3. Unfaithful brother deprived of attention and neglected by church.
   B. It attempts to solve problem by watering guilty with what was allegedly deprived of.
      1. Allows him to wallow in self-pity.
2. Keeps him from facing his guilt and repenting of it.

IV. The Disease Approach.
A. No sinners, criminals, or wicked folks — just patients and people with problems.
B. No needing for discipline and/or punishment, just sympathy and understanding.
C. No need to blame a sick person, he is a victim.

Conclusion:
A. Brethren must face responsibility to deal with internal sin. (1 Cor. 5).
B. Brethren will not face up to this responsibility until they:
   1. Stop thinking they have to be perfect to correct a sinner.
   2. Stop looking around to find another cause rather than sinner's sinfulness.
   3. Stop timidly allowing rebellious brethren send them on “guilt trip” to avoid correction. (cf. 2 Cor. 7:2; Acts 20:26,27).
C. Brethren need to examine themselves to avoid:
   1. Becoming unfaithful to the Lord.
   2. Becoming a stumbling block to others. (Rom. 14).
   3. But, the bottom line is still: “The wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”