

EZEKIEL

Cry Me a River

*By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down,
yea, we wept When we remembered Zion
Psalm 137:1*

Text

Ezekiel 6:1-14

Topic

The LORD tells Ezekiel to get the attention of the Jews by stamping his feet so He can tell them that their sin is breaking His heart.

Title

***“Stamp! In the Name of Love
Before They Break My Heart”***

What are your thoughts on impassibility?

Impassibility is the teaching that God does not experience pain, suffering, or emotional changes as humans do. It asserts that God is not subject to external influences or feelings, maintaining His perfect, unchanging nature while still being loving and involved with His creation.

Can God experience pain and suffering due to our sin? Is He affected by our actions? Does He react to us?

We come across passages in the Bible that assume we do emotionally affect God... Like today.

The LORD illustrates His experience with the nation of Israel as that of a faithful Husband married to an unfaithful wife, playing the harlot, being whorish, committing spiritual adultery.

He says of Himself, “I was crushed.”

Other Bible versions translate it, "I have been broken" (ESV), "I have been hurt" (NASB), "I have been grieved" (NIV), and "How broken I have been" (Complete Jewish Bible).

If the LORD cannot be affected by our behavior, this illustration has zero impact.

Israel is front & center. Nevertheless we can't help thinking about ourselves because the Lord thinks of the Church as His bride. In his letter, James warns about spiritual adultery in the Church (James 4:4-5).

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 God Reacts To Your Unfaithfulness With Pressure**, and **#2 God Responds To Your Faithfulness With Protection**.

#1 - God Reacts To Your Unfaithfulness With Pressure (v1-7&11-14)

On January 1st 1970 California became the first state to recognize No-Fault Divorce.

When a couple divorces, they cite Irreconcilable Differences. *God cannot check that box.* He sees His people as reconcilable. He has made the way for reconciliation.

Ezk 6:1 Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

Ezk 6:2 "Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them,

Ezk 6:3 and say, 'O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains, to the hills, to the ravines, and to the valleys: "Indeed I, even I, will bring a sword against you, and I will destroy your high places.

Ezk 6:4 Then your altars shall be desolate, your incense altars shall be broken...

The "mountains," "hills," "ravines," and "valleys" were the locations of the "high places," "altars," "incense altars," and "idols." Think of the high places as shrines where idols were housed having altars for both sacrifice and for incense.

The term "high places" isn't about altitude. It refers to any places where foreign gods were worshipped. The Hebrew word *gillulim*, translated "idols," literally means "dung-gods," or "stink-gods."

These structures were in the land when Israel crossed the Jordan to conquer it. They were the places the pagan Gentiles worshipped. The Jews never did fully eliminate

them, or when they did, as in the days of King Josiah and King Hezekiah, they were swiftly rebuilt by their successors.

Bad, bad stuff happened at these sites:

- The fertility gods & goddesses required their patrons to commit all manner of perverted sex acts.
- Molech was worshipped with human sacrifice. Substitute "infant" for human.

The Israelites worshipped God in His Temple, and they messed around on the side with the gods & goddesses of the world.

If they wouldn't eliminate the shrines, God said He would do it. His methods were extreme. He wouldn't simply tear down the shrines. *All their dwelling places in all their cities would be torn down along with the shrines.*

When God deemed it the right time, He went scorched earth.

GOOGLE "high places" and you can find hundreds of sermons about removing the high places in your life. One way is for you to make it harder to sin by quite literally removing things, or removing yourself from things. Build in safeguards so you do not find yourself at a place, or with a person, where you can sin.

The Bible then encourages you to replace anything you eliminate or are trying to eliminate with that which is good. Putting away lying, 'LET EACH ONE OF YOU SPEAK TRUTH WITH HIS NEIGHBOR,' for we are members of one another. 'BE ANGRY, AND DO NOT SIN:' do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers (Ephesians 4:25-29).

Ezk 6:4 Then your altars shall be desolate, your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain men before your idols.

Ezk 6:5 And I will lay the corpses of the children of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones all around your altars.

Ezk 6:6 In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate, so that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, your idols may be broken and made to cease, your incense altars may be cut down, and your works may be abolished.

Ezk 6:7 The slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I am the LORD.

The nation of Israel was tasked by God to explain the righteousness of God. They miserably failed, instead becoming more like the unsaved, spiritually ignorant Gentiles.

Destroying the shrines was one thing. Laying the corpses of children before their idols... How could God do that?

First, *this hadn't yet happened*. The LORD warned them it was the inevitable end of the rebel road they were choosing. When this destruction happened, it was their fault, not God's.

Second, we think in terms of individuals whereas God was thinking nations. If you want to discipline a nation, you sometimes use another nation to overthrow it.

Third, there is something that we tend to forget. Jeremiah was prophet-ing in Jerusalem. "Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "This is what the LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'If you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, your life will be spared and this city will not be burned down; you and your family will live' " (38:17).

Wow! They could surrender and the calamity would be lessened. God goes to incredible lengths to save.

Skip to verse eleven.

Ezk 6:11 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Pound your fists and stamp your feet..."

Ezekiel is getting the hang of physical prophecy. Pounding & stamping were symbolic of them not listening.

Ezk 6:11 ... and say, 'Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! For they shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.

Ezk 6:12 He who is far off shall die by the pestilence, he who is near shall fall by the sword, and he who remains and is besieged shall die by the famine. Thus will I spend My fury upon them.

Ezk 6:13 Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when their slain are among their idols all around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, under every

green tree, and under every thick oak, wherever they offered sweet incense to all their idols.

Ezk 6:14 So I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land desolate, yes, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblah, in all their dwelling places. Then they shall know that I am the LORD." " " "

The punishments listed here... *They blow our minds.* They are, however, better than the alternative. It is appointed unto men once to die, and afterwards comes eternity. If you die in unbelief, there can be no mercy or second chance. There is only the Lake of Fire where you will suffer eternal conscious torment.

"They shall know that I am the LORD." This occurs four times in this short message. How would they know? *They would know because of the pressure being applied.*

Seeing the "slain are among their idols all around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, under every green tree, and under every thick oak, wherever they offered sweet incense to all their idols" is a final, radical, effort on God's part to save them. On the surface His wrath seems cruel. It was the only means available for God to reach them before it became too late.

One of the commentators writes, "God's chief desire is to bring people to Himself - or back to Himself. When mankind willfully refuses to turn to Him, God mercifully uses discipline and judgment to cause the people to recognize that He is the only true God, always faithful to what He has said in His word!"

If anything in this life is certain, if history has taught us anything, it's that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to eternal life.

You would likely study this passage in a Bible doctrines class. The Lord, however, isn't *explaining* His impassibility.

Put yourself in Babylon, among the exiles to whom Ezekiel was addressing. You hear that God is "crushed," "hurt," "grieved, and "broken." You are the one hurting Him. You are, in fact, an adulterer (and all the other things).

Ideally, you prostrate yourself before God, horrified that you have treated Him with such disdain.

#2 - God Responds To Your Faithfulness With Protection (v8-10)

Albert Barnes suggests that *“sin leads to judgment, judgment to repentance, repentance to forgiveness, forgiveness to reconciliation, reconciliation to a knowledge of communion with God.”*

That is always true of a small group of believing Jews throughout Israel’s history, called a “remnant.”

Ezk 6:8 *“Yet I will leave a remnant, so that you may have some who escape the sword among the nations, when you are scattered through the countries.*

A remnant is what is left of a community after it undergoes a catastrophe.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee commented,

Never throughout the long history of Israel did 100% of the nation worship God. Always only a remnant was faithful to Him. It was a remnant of those which came out of Egypt that entered the land. Practically the entire generation that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness. It was their children who entered the land. In Elijah’s day God had a faithful remnant. Elijah cried, “Lord, I only am left.” But God told him, “You aren’t the only one; I have seven thousand in these mountains who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” At the coming of Jesus, although the leaders of the nation rejected Him and had Him crucified, there was a remnant that received Him.

Ezk 6:9 Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations where they are carried captive, because I was crushed by their adulteress heart which has departed from Me, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols; they will loathe themselves for the evils which they committed in all their abominations.

The remnant are those whose own hearts are broken realizing how they’ve hurt the Lord. It is described as “loath[ing] themselves.”

Ezk 6:10 And they shall know that I am the LORD; I have not said in vain that I would bring this calamity upon them.”

The aim of God’s judgment is described four times: “Then they will know that I am the Lord.”

John L. MacKay says remnant *“is a two-sided word. In the first instance it speaks of disaster and loss ahead. But there is promise in it too. It will not be a total catastrophe, for there will be a divinely preserved remnant.”*

The LORD appointed Ezekiel to share His Word with the exiles. Some heard it with spiritual ears to hear. They were suddenly gripped with the fear of the LORD, His holiness, and their own sinfulness. They believed Him and He counted it as righteousness. They were saved.

Did they go on loathing themselves? Better yet, are we supposed to loathe ourselves?

Yes & No:

↳ Yes, I loathe what is called the *flesh*. "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good."¹

The flesh, my propensity to sin, I loathe, and I will until I receive my eternal body at the resurrection or rapture.

↳ No, I do not loathe myself, wallowing in self-pity and false humility. I am saved, and have the permanent indwelling of God the Holy Spirit. He enables me to obey God. I *can* do the things the Lord tells me to.

One commentator put it this way: "Don't dwell on your corruption to the degree that it keeps you from joy, freedom, and love."

Passibility is to be capable of feeling, especially suffering or to be susceptible to emotion. When theologians speak of God's passibility versus His impassibility, they are referring to His freedom to respond emotionally versus a perceived lack of empathy for His creatures.

- The doctrine of the passibility of God *does not* teach that God is fickle, has mood swings, or cannot control His responses. God is never the victim of circumstance.
- The doctrine of passibility *does* teach that God is emotionally invested in His creation; He is involved because He cares.

Have you ever told a believer you were backslidden? Have you ever been told by a believer that you were backslidden?

¹ See Romans 7

How about telling or being told you were a prodigal?

As awful as those characterizations may be, they are mild when compared to being told you are an unfaithful spiritual adulterer or adulteress, a whoring harlot.

Warren Wiersbe likes to retell the story of man who came up to him after a sermon in which he had spoken about sin. He said, "Sin is different for Christians." I said, "Yes, it is - *it's worse!*"

Wiersbe was emphasizing that, for Christians who know the truth and have experienced God's grace, sin is even more grievous because they are sinning against a greater light and understanding.