

## Redeemer C S I Bible Study Ezekiel 20:34-49, August 22, 2024

**\*\*2 Corinthians 3:6 (NRSV): \*\* "...for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."**

In this context, Paul contrasts the old covenant, based on the law (the "letter"), with the new covenant, brought by the Spirit. The "letter" refers to the written law, which, without the Spirit, can lead to condemnation because it reveals human sinfulness but doesn't empower us to overcome it. On the other hand, the Spirit brings life, offering the grace and power to live in a way that pleases God. This verse emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit in giving life and freedom and the transformative power of the Spirit, inspiring hope and a sense of renewal.

**\*\*John 6:63 (NRSV): \*\* "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." In this verse, Jesus teaches that true life comes from the Spirit of God. While the physical body, or flesh, has its limitations, the Spirit gives eternal life and vitality. Jesus emphasizes that His words are not merely physical or temporary but full of spirit and life, offering a life-giving power that transcends the material world. This verse not only encourages us to focus on spiritual nourishment but also assures us that the words of Jesus sustain our souls and give us true life, fostering a sense of spiritual nourishment and sustenance.**

**\*\*Proverbs 18:21 (NRSV): \*\* "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits." This verse highlights the immense influence our words can have. Words can either build up or tear down, give life or cause harm. Just as words of encouragement, truth, and love can lift someone's spirit, criticism, deceit, or hate can deeply wound and "kill" the spirit. This passage reminds us to be mindful of how we speak to others, understanding that our words can influence their lives profoundly. It encourages speaking life-giving words that reflect God's love and truth.**

**Ezekiel 20:34-49 Addresses the rebelliousness of the Israelites and warns them of the consequences of their actions.**

1. **\*\*God's Sovereignty and Judgment (verses 34-36):\*\*** God asserts His sovereignty, stating that He will gather the Israelites from the nations where they have been scattered. He will bring them into the wilderness and judge them face to face, just as He judged their ancestors in the wilderness of Egypt. This emphasizes God's control over their fate and his righteous judgment.
2. **\*\*Purification of the People (verses 37-38):\*\*** God will separate the rebellious from the obedient among the Israelites. He will bring them into the covenant bond, but the disobedient will not enter the land of Israel. This purification process is meant to ensure that only the faithful remain.
3. **\*\*God's Demand for True Worship (verses 39-40):\*\*** God commands the Israelites to cease idolatry, stating that those who persist in worshiping idols will be left to their choices. However, true worshipers will offer sacrifices and offerings on God's holy mountain in Israel, where He will accept them. This point highlights the importance of sincere and exclusive worship of God.
4. **\*\*God's Restoration and Holiness (verses 41-44):\*\*** After the judgment and purification, God promises to restore Israel. He will gather them from the nations and show His holiness through them. When they are brought back to their land, the people will recognize God as their Lord, remember their sins, and loathe themselves for their unfaithfulness. This restoration is meant to bring true repentance and a renewed relationship with God.
5. **\*\*Prophecy Against the South (verses 45-49):\*\*** The final section is a prophecy against the southern kingdom, often called Judah. God commands Ezekiel to deliver a message of impending judgment, where a fire will devour the land from the south to the north. This symbolizes widespread destruction due to the people's persistent sin—the people mock Ezekiel's message, showing their continued hardness of heart.