

When Life Isn't Fair

A Five-Day Devotional
from Pastor Chris's Sunday Message

September 28 - October 2, 2026

Sometimes we find ourselves living with consequences we didn't create. Someone else's decision affects our family. Another person's mistake changes our plans. Circumstances outside our control leave us carrying disappointment, loss, or uncertainty we never asked for. It's natural to look at those situations and say, "This isn't fair." And sometimes, we're right.

The people of Israel understood that feeling. Living in exile, they repeated a proverb about parents eating sour grapes while their children were left with the unpleasant taste. In other words: "We're suffering because of what someone else did."

There was truth in their complaint. Previous generations' choices had consequences. But God did not want His people to become so focused on who was responsible for their circumstances that they stopped listening to what He was saying to them now.

That same invitation comes to us. God doesn't ask us to pretend that the past didn't happen or that painful circumstances don't matter. Instead, He reminds us that the past does not have to determine what happens next.

This week, we'll move from blame toward responsibility, from grumbling toward listening, and from feeling trapped by yesterday toward trusting the God who is still speaking today. We may not get to choose everything that happens to us, but with God's help, we can choose how we respond.

When It Wasn't Your Fault

“The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.” — Ezekiel 18:2, ESV

Israel was living in exile, far from home and surrounded by circumstances they hadn't personally chosen. A proverb began circulating among the people: their ancestors had eaten the sour grapes, but they were left with the unpleasant taste. In modern language, they were saying, “We didn't cause this. Why are we the ones dealing with it?”

Sometimes that's a legitimate question. Sin and brokenness rarely affect only one person. Decisions can ripple through families, friendships, churches, workplaces, communities, and even generations. We may find ourselves dealing with consequences created long before we ever had a voice in the matter.

God doesn't ask us to pretend those things aren't painful. But there is a danger when “This wasn't my fault” slowly becomes “Therefore, nothing can ever change.” Blame can identify where something began, but it cannot always tell us where to go next.

Pastor Chris invites us to acknowledge what is unfair without allowing unfairness to become the defining story of our lives. God meets us honestly in what happened, but He also reminds us that our future is still in His hands.

You may not have chosen the circumstances you're carrying. But God is present with you in them, and He is not finished writing your story.

Reflect: What situation in your life makes you want to say, “I didn't cause this,” and how might you honestly acknowledge that hurt without allowing it to determine your future?

Prayer:
God, You know the burdens I carry that I did not choose. Meet me in my hurt and help me trust that my past and present circumstances do not have the final word. Amen.

You Don't Have to Continue the Pattern

“So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold.” — 1 Kings 12:28, ESV

To understand Israel's exile, Pastor Chris takes us backward into Israel's history. Their circumstances didn't develop overnight. Years of decisions, compromises, and misplaced worship gradually led God's people farther away from Him.

King Jeroboam created new places and objects of worship because they served his political purposes. What may have seemed practical became spiritually destructive. Over time, compromise became normal.

We experience patterns like this too. Families, organizations, communities, and cultures develop ways of doing things that can be passed along without anyone stopping to ask whether they're healthy. We inherit attitudes about money, relationships, conflict, success, anger, forgiveness, faith, and even God Himself. We may not have started those patterns, but we still choose whether to continue them.

That's where grace gives us tremendous hope. You are not required to repeat what you inherited.

God can help us recognize unhealthy patterns without spending our lives blaming the people who handed them to us. We can acknowledge where something came from and still decide, “With God's help, this pattern can change with me.” The past can explain us without controlling us.

Reflect: What unhealthy pattern have you inherited or learned from others that God may be inviting you to stop repeating?

Prayer:
Lord, give me wisdom to recognize the patterns that pull me away from You. Help me keep what is good, release what is harmful, and choose a faithful path forward. Amen.

God Is Still at Work

“Ahab did more to provoke the LORD…than all the kings of Israel who were before him.” — 1 Kings 16:33, ESV

By the time Ahab became king, Israel's spiritual drift had become something much more serious. Ahab didn't merely tolerate idolatry; he encouraged it. Leaders’ decisions affected an entire nation, and those choices eventually led to consequences for generations. Scripture doesn't hide this uncomfortable reality. What we do affects other people.

But even during Israel's rebellion, God did not stop speaking. He continued sending prophets. He warned His people. He called them back. He corrected them and invited them to return. That is an important truth when life feels confusing: hard circumstances do not automatically mean God has abandoned us.

Sometimes we become so focused on asking, “Why is this happening?” that we miss another important question: “God, what are You doing here?”

That doesn't mean God sent every painful event to teach us something. Nor does it mean we should pretend suffering is good. It means that no circumstance is beyond God's ability to meet us, shape us, redirect us, and bring life from places that appear hopeless.

Even in exile, God was still speaking. And even here, God is still at work.

Reflect: Instead of only asking God, “Why is this happening?” what might change if you also began asking, “Lord, how are You calling me to trust or follow You here?”

Prayer:
God, when I don't understand my circumstances, help me recognize Your presence. Show me where You are working and give me faith to follow where You lead. Amen.

Quiet the Grumbling

I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts." — 1 Kings 19:10, ESV

Elijah knew what it was like to feel exhausted, frustrated, and alone. He had been faithful, yet his circumstances seemed to worsen instead of improve. When God asked what he was doing there, Elijah poured out everything he was carrying.

God listened.

That's important because Scripture doesn't teach us that faithful people never complain. There is a difference between lament and grumbling. Lament brings our pain to God because we trust Him enough to hear it. Grumbling can become a loop that repeats our frustration so loudly that eventually it's the only voice we hear.

Pastor Chris challenges us to consider whether our grumbling has become so loud that we no longer listen. Sometimes we need to stop rehearsing everything that's wrong long enough to ask, "God, what are You saying to me here?"

Listening doesn't guarantee an immediate answer. It is simply a posture of faith. It says, "Lord, I don't like where I am. I don't understand everything that has happened. But I still believe You are here, and I still believe You have something to say."

The circumstances may not change immediately. But listening creates space for God to begin changing us.

Reflect: What complaint has been repeating most loudly in your mind lately, and what might happen if you became quiet long enough to ask God what He wants you to hear?

Prayer:
Lord, quiet the voices of frustration and resentment within me. Help me bring You my honest pain and then become still enough to listen for Your voice. Amen.

What Will You Do Next?

“Repent and turn from all your transgressions.” — Ezekiel 18:30, ESV

The past mattered. The sins of previous generations had real consequences. God wasn't asking the exiles to rewrite history or pretend that everything that happened to them was fair. But He also refused to let them believe they were powerless. God called them to turn.

There is tremendous hope in that invitation because it means yesterday doesn't get to make every decision about tomorrow.

We cannot change what someone else did. We cannot undo every consequence of the past. We cannot control every circumstance surrounding us. But through God's grace, we can decide how we will respond today.

We can forgive instead of feeding resentment. We can seek help instead of remaining isolated. We can change a destructive pattern instead of passing it along. We can listen instead of constantly grumbling. We can turn toward God instead of allowing disappointment to pull us farther away.

Repentance isn't God's way of trapping us in shame. It is His invitation to turn around and discover that another direction is possible.

The people in exile could not change how they arrived there. But with God, they could decide who they would become there. And so can we.

Reflect: What is one thing from your past or present that you cannot change—and what is one faithful next step that, with God's help, you can choose?

Prayer:
God, help me release what I cannot change and take responsibility for the choices I can make today. Turn my heart toward You and lead me into renewal, purpose, and hope. Amen.

A Little Encouragement to Share

If these devotional reflections have encouraged you, challenged you, or helped you see God's Word in a new way, consider sharing this booklet with a friend, family member, neighbor, or someone who might need a little encouragement this week.

Sometimes a simple word of faith can make a difference.

Want to hear more?
Watch the message that inspired this week's devotional and continue the journey with us in worship.

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