



WINDOW TO BGST NEWSLETTER

▶ JUN 2019

WTB 2019-06



REFLECTIONS ON EZEKIEL



By Mr Eugene Lai

BGST Student, MCS 2019

Ezekiel 34:17-21 (NIV)

17 “As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. 18 Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? 19 Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

20 “Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21 Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away

Introduction

Ezekiel 34:17-21 criticises the strong sheep for harming the weak sheep. The marketplace is intensely competitive. In such an environment, do the strong have a responsibility to care about the weak? I believe this passage from Ezekiel contains an important principle that is relevant to people operating in the marketplace.

Let me share an example. Agile Manufacturing Private Limited is a company that manufactures component parts. The company did well for many years but an economic slowdown hurt its business. Management retrenches a significant number of employees to cut costs.

The affected employees worry they won't be able to provide for their families and make ends meet. Some people are traumatized. Many people only

have enough funds to last a short time. According to a CareerBuilder survey in 2017, 78 percent of Americans say they are living paycheck-to-paycheck to make ends meet.

Sam's situation is typical. He worked for the company for many years and was a good worker. He is in his early 50s, his wife gave up her career many years ago to take care of the children and they have two teenage children. He had hoped to keep working until his mid-60s to support his children's education, finish paying off the housing loan and build up a modest nest egg for retirement. Sam takes the news of his retrenchment badly. He worries about finding another good job at his age. He worries that his savings will be depleted. His confidence is shaken and he is embarrassed to tell his family the bad news.

Was management's decision to retrench justified?

It is not difficult to make a good argument supporting it. Not doing so could jeopardize the whole business, leading to more jobs being lost eventually.

If the retrenchment is justified, does management have a duty to treat the retrenched employees fairly?

For example, should the company provide the affected employees with sufficient notice so they have as much time as possible to look for new jobs and pay them adequate retrenchment benefits to help them tide over the difficult period?

What if the company is in fact performing well and management decides to retrench employees anyway to increase the company's profitability even further. Is this justified?

You could still make a good argument to support this. Management's duty is to the company and shareholders and this includes maximizing profit. Many people in the marketplace would accept this as a satisfactory explanation.

At what point does management cross the line from doing what is reasonable and justifiable to being greedy and ruthless at the expense of the weak?

We have all seen situations where one's pursuit of gain or advantage was at the expense of the weak.

What does Ezekiel have to say about these situations?

Historical Context

In 597 BC King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered Judah and in line with Babylonian practice at the time deported 10,000 Jews, comprising the upper classes of Jewish society, to Babylon. Ezekiel was among the deportees. In 589 BC Nebuchadnezzar began a siege of Jerusalem which caused great suffering. When Jerusalem fell, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city and the Temple, events which Ezekiel had prophesied.

These were traumatic and turbulent times. Many Jews would have felt despair and hopelessness. Ezekiel had a few key messages for them. What had happened to Judah was

punishment for its sins; the Jews had been unfaithful to God and did not live in accordance with the Covenant. Ezekiel emphasized God's sovereignty, national accountability and individual responsibility. Finally, Ezekiel gave the exiles hope; God had not abandoned them and they would be restored in the holy land and the Temple would be rebuilt if they repent and turn away from their sins.

Main Idea

God will judge people who are strong if they unjustifiably harm the interests of the weak.

Outline

Some people are stronger than others because of their wealth, position or specific circumstances.

People in such positions must care about the interests of the weak.

Exegesis

Chapter 34 is one distinct block and should be read as a whole. I have chosen to focus on our passage because I think it has wide application today.

In verses 1 to 16, Ezekiel rebukes the shepherds of Israel because they only care for themselves and not their flock. God will remove the flock from them and care for the flock himself. "Shepherds of Israel" means the nation's leaders.

Whereas in those verses God judges the shepherds and speaks tenderly about the flock, in verse 17 God turns to judge the flock. The sins of the shepherds do not excuse the sins of the flock.

Verse 17 refers to "one sheep and another" and "rams and goats". The phrase "one sheep and another" contains no indication that some sheep were stronger than others. This could be a reference to ordinary people. The phrase "rams and goats" refers to the male gender (some versions of the Bible expressly say "male goats"). The implication is that they are stronger than the rest. Some Christian commentators believe this phrase refers to people with power and wealth or to community leaders and elders. They are strong because of their wealth or position.

In verses 18 and 19, the charge against some sheep is that after they took care of their own needs, they then damaged what should have been for the benefit of others. These sheep were strong because of the specific situation they were in. They could damage the pasture and water because they got there first. Strength can be situational.

There is no indication the harm was intentional. It is enough that the harm was caused with careless disregard for the interests of the weak.

In verse 20, there is a reference to "fat sheep and lean sheep". Some commentators think this refers to the rich and poor. The rich are strong compared to the poor.

Verse 21 is explicit about the abuse, describing the strong as shoving and butting the weak. It is interesting that this picture of sheep in close proximity with each other and shoving and butting each other until some are driven away is reminiscent of a competitive marketplace.

I do not believe the passage prohibits all harm to the weak. That would be unrealistic. Many actions in life have costs and benefits and in some situations, the benefits outweigh the costs.

So when is harm to the weak unjustifiable?

The passage does not address this question explicitly. The text does not give any reasons for why the sheep acted the way they did. However, the language and tone of the text indicate that the attitude of the strong was the problem. They displayed careless disregard and a lack of mercy and justice for the weak. The strong sheep should have cared about the weak but did not. This is consistent with the rest of Scripture which contains numerous passages that the strong should not oppress or mistreat the weak.

Application

In some situations it is obvious when someone is strong and others are weak. The CEO of a company is strong in relation to the company's employees. However, there are other situations which are less obvious. In our workplace, we may be strong in relation to those who are junior to us, support staff, service providers and customers who depend on us. Strength of course exists outside the marketplace as well. For example, in our homes, we may be strong in relation to our spouse, children, aged parents and domestic helpers.

When we are strong and can harm others, we have a responsibility to consider our actions carefully. In practice, many people would do this when their interests are at stake. However, what people often don't do is take into account, or place sufficient weight on, the interests of the

weak. The weak have no voice and are not able to fight back and the strong suffer little or no consequence neglecting the weak.

Must the strong care about the weak in the marketplace? I believe Ezekiel requires it. When we are strong because of our wealth, position or specific circumstances, it is our responsibility to care about the interests of the weak.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIBRARY & BOOK CORNER TIMINGS

17-19 June	Book Corner will be closed for internal stock take
10-30 June	Library and Book Corner will have no extended hours and are closed on Saturdays

CHANGE IN AUDIT FEES

Beginning July 1, 2019, BGST Audit Fees will increase to \$120 per 1.5 credit module and \$240 per 3.0 credit module, respectively.

BGST ACCESS MEMBERSHIP

Beginning **July 1, 2020**, BGST will be introducing the BGST Access Membership. With your BGST Access Membership, you can access the entire BGST Library, benefiting from thousands of books, journals, e-books and more. This Membership will be mandatory for credit students and optional for audit students. Members may renew their annual membership online.

Fees

1. General Public \$25/year
2. Audit Students \$25/year
3. Credit Students \$35*/semester

*Mandatory for Credit Students. Includes administration, registration and technology fees.

Due to the generosity of our donors, we are able to absorb the above costs for 12-months. Thus, the BGST Access Membership Fee will only be in effect from **July 1, 2020** onwards. Fees will remain unchanged up to this point.



DR LAI PAK WAH

BGST Principal
Lecturer

(Church History &
Historical Theology)

BGST IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE INDUCTION OF DR LAI PAK WAH AS THE NEW PRINCIPAL

BGST is pleased to announce the induction of Dr Lai Pak Wah as the new Principal. BGST thanks Dr Philip Satterthwaite for his 8.5 years of faithful service as Principal, and prays that God will grant him a smooth transition into his new role as Registrar. BGST looks forward to this new chapter and prays that God will walk alongside Dr Lai and the BGST team as they continue to seek His will for the school.

YOU ARE WARMLY INVITED TO THE INDUCTION CEREMONY OF DR LAI

Monday, 29 July 2019

Dinner 6:30 pm, Ceremony 7:30 - 9:30 pm

Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church
77 Prinsep St, Singapore 188649

Registration is free bit.ly/bgstinduction



A photograph of a library office and counters. In the foreground, there is a curved wooden counter with a laptop displaying a website, a telephone, and a small sign that says "SELF CHECK-IN RETURNING STATION". Behind the counter, there is a desk with a computer monitor, a lamp, and some books. On the wall, there are several framed pictures, including a pink flower and a purple flower. To the right, there is a wooden chair with a cushion.

CHANGES TO THE LIBRARY TO SERVE YOU BETTER!

THE LIBRARY OFFICE AND COUNTERS HAVE BEEN RELOCATED TO LEVEL 1

To enable students to pick up or return books after BGST library's office hours, we are introducing a **book drop cum collection service outside the school entrance.**

Returning Books: To return books after office hours, please notify Daisy by email (simd@bgst.edu.sg) or call the library staff at 62276815 (x 210 or x 222). You will be provided with the number lock combination. Please pack all your items in a bag before depositing them in the cabinet.

Borrowing Books: To borrow books, please email (1) the book title(s) and (2) the call number(s) to simd@bgst.edu.sg. Once they are ready for collection, the books will be checked out to you and placed in the same cabinet. The number lock combination will be provided and you can find them in a bag with your name attached.



Kindly lock the
cabinet after use

THIS SERVICE WILL BE AVAILABLE TO YOU WITH EFFECT FROM 1 JULY.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2019

BOOK LAUNCH / 20 JUL (SAT)

Men for Christ: Living out Our Faith Vol. II
9:00 am - 11:15 am @ Mt Carmel BP Church
Open to All. No registration required

MICAH CONVERSATION 2019 / 19-20 JUL

7:30 pm - 9:30 pm (19 Jul)
9:00 am - 6:00 pm (20 Jul)
@Covenant Presbyterian Church
tiny.cc/micahconversation

INDUCTION OF THE NEW BGST PRINCIPAL / 29 JUL (MON)

6:30 pm (Dinner), 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm (Ceremony)
@ Prinsep St Presbyterian Church
bit.ly/bgstinduction

UK CHURCH HISTORY TOUR / 7-18 AUG

"BGST CHURCH HISTORY TOUR 3: THE SPIRITUAL
LEGACY OF BRITISH CHRISTIANITY"
@ United Kingdom
Email **laipw@bgst.edu.sg**

SEMINAR / 30-31 AUG (FRI-SAT)

"PASTORAL APPROACHES SEMINARS"
Speakers from Journey Singapore and Journey Canada
9:00 am - 4:00 pm @ Prinsep St Presbyterian Church
bit.ly/paseminar

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www.bgst.edu.sg

BUSINESS OPERATIONS MANAGER POSITION



To support our local and regional expansion, we are recruiting a Business Operations Manager (BOM).

This will be a full-time position.

Interested applicants, please contact Dr Lai Pak Wah (Vice-Principal) at laipw@bgst.edu.sg

JOB DESCRIPTION

The candidate will:

1. head the administrative department, library, finance, marketing and fund-raising;
2. work alongside the Principal and Faculty to establish long-term goals;
3. lead the implementation of operational goals and strategies
4. provide administrative and governance support for the Council, Principal and Faculty.

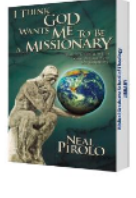

JOB REQUIREMENTS

The candidate must:

1. be proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint
2. be skilled at developing business processes and policies
3. be skilled at process mapping
4. be proficient with IT and Web technologies
5. share BGST's conviction of the importance of theological education for the whole people of God, and a passion for facilitating marketplace ministry
6. be a team player, able to work collaboratively with Faculty and staff

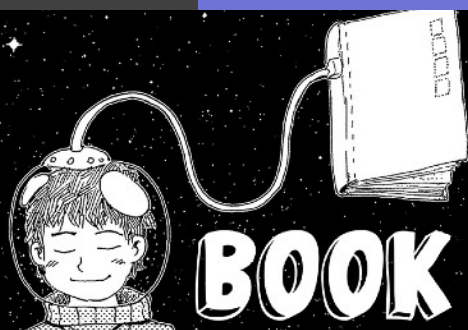
NEW
BOOKS

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Y

BOOK	TITLE	AUTHORS	CATEGORY
	Prepare Your Church For The Future	George, Carl F.	Church Work
	Battling Unbelief	Piper, John	Faith
	Revisioning John Chrysostom: New Approaches, New Perspectives	De Wet, Chris L. Mayer, Wendy	John Chrysostom - Saint
	Cultivate: Forming The Emerging Generation Through Life-On-Life Mentoring	Myers, Jeff	Mentoring - Religious Aspects - Christianity - Study And Teaching
	I Think God Wants Me To Be A Missionary: Issues To Deal With Long Before You Say Good-Bye	Pirollo, Neal	Missionaries Appointment - Call - Election
	Welcome To Adulting: Navigating Faith, Friendship, Finances, And The Future.	Pokluda, Jonathan	Young Adults - Religious Life

MORE NEW BOOKS AT

<https://bgst.vlibonline.com/images/201905-bull.html>



BOOK SALE!

1-15 JUNE



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BIBLICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

www.bgst.edu.sg

50 Kallang Pudding Road, #07-01, AMA Building
(Previously Golden Wheel Industrial Building), Singapore 349326

Tel: 065-6227-6815

OFFICE TIMINGS

Monday to Friday: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm (Closed from 12-1 pm, Wed from 12-2 pm)

Extended Hours for Library & Book Corner

Monday & Thursday: 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm Saturday: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm