

EZEKIEL

Hard to Heart

“Like Mother, Like Daughter”

16:35-63

Pastor and author Warren Wiersbe often uses the following illustration.

I heard about a pastor who gave a series of sermons on “The Sins of the Saints.” One member of the church, apparently under conviction, disapproved of the series and told the pastor so. “After all, “ he said, “sin in the life of a Christian is different from sin in the life of an unsaved person.”

“Yes, it is,” the pastor replied. ***“It’s worse!”***

I want us to think about that conclusion in two ways as we work through the remainder of Ezekiel chapter sixteen:

1. First, the sins of Israel were worse than those of the surrounding pagan nations because they knew the living God and had His law to guide them.
2. Second, sin in the church among Christians is far worse than Israel’s because we have her example to warn us and because sinning against grace is worse than sinning against Law.

The first thirty-four verses of chapter sixteen described the Jews in Judah and especially Jerusalem as an adulterous wife to God and a harlot to the surrounding Gentile nations.

God’s judgment upon her is the subject of the rest of the chapter.

Ezekiel 16:35 'Now then, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord!

Ezekiel 16:36 Thus says the Lord God: "Because your filthiness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your harlotry with your lovers, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children which you gave to them, Ezekiel 16:37 surely, therefore, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved, and all those you hated; I will gather them from all around against you and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness.

Ezekiel 16:38 And I will judge you as women who break wedlock or shed blood are judged; I will bring blood upon you in fury and jealousy.

God described the sins of the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem as spiritual adultery. If they could see how they looked to God they would see themselves as harlots who had sacrificed their own children for their lusts.

We need to think less about how we look to others, or compared to others, and more about how we look to God. How would I be dressed if my heart were to be made known? Hopefully like a bride ready for her wedding!

Under the Law of God such a woman would be publicly exposed then stoned to death. Think of the woman caught in adultery and brought to Jesus in the Gospel of John. She was brought naked, exposed, and the Law required her to be stoned.

Ezekiel 16:39 I will also give you into their hand, and they shall throw down your shrines and break down your high places. They shall also strip you of your clothes, take your beautiful jewelry, and leave you naked and bare.

Ezekiel 16:40 "They shall also bring up an assembly against you, and they shall stone you with stones and thrust you through with their swords.

Ezekiel 16:41 They shall burn your houses with fire, and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women; and I will make you cease playing the harlot, and you shall no longer hire lovers.

The Jews were under a double judgment because the Law also prescribed punishment for cities involved in idolatry. These verses describe the coming invasion by Babylon as just such a judgment.

The reference to these things happening "in the sight of many women" is probably to the surrounding Gentile nations.

Ezekiel 16:42 So I will lay to rest My fury toward you, and My jealousy shall depart from you. I will be quiet, and be angry no more.

Ezekiel 16:43 Because you did not remember the days of your youth, but agitated Me with all these things, surely I will also recompense your deeds on your own head," says the Lord God. "And you shall not commit lewdness in addition to all your abominations.

The Lord said that Jerusalem's judgment would alleviate His "fury" and His "jealousy." He was speaking as a husband who had an unfaithful wife - a wife who was a harlot, who paid others to have sex with her. She was beyond repenting and God had no other alternative but to treat her according to the Law.

Where's the grace, you ask? *It's at the end of the chapter!* Even for all her sins the Lord promised to restore Israel in the future.

Ezekiel 16:44 "Indeed everyone who quotes proverbs will use this proverb against you: 'Like mother, like daughter!'

Ezekiel 16:45 You are your mother's daughter, loathing husband and children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children; your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite.

We said last time that the reference to Israel's mother being a Hittite and her father being an Amorite was a way of referring to the Gentile nations in the land of Canaan at the time Israel was born as a nation via God's calling of Abraham.

Could be, too, that this is an insult. It sort of reminds you of the time Jesus told the Jews they had become like their father, the devil. Israel had become like those nations. In fact, she had become worse.

If you are wondering who her "sisters" were, you're told next.

Ezekiel 16:46 "Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who dwells to the south of you, is Sodom and her daughters.

Ezekiel 16:47 You did not walk in their ways nor act according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you became more corrupt than they in all your ways.

Ezekiel 16:48 "As I live," says the Lord God, "neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and your daughters have done.

God is explaining the horror of their sin by way of comparison and contrast.

“Samaria” was the capital of the northern kingdom called Israel. “Sodom” is the famous Gentile city destroyed by God in the book of Genesis.

The point being emphasized here is that the Jerusalem Jews were worse than either of those cities!

Ezekiel 16:49 Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

Ezekiel 16:50 And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.

Sodom is a good example of the teaching you find in the first chapter of Romans. It details what happens to Gentiles when they reject the revelation of God in their hearts and in creation in order to follow their own lusts.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Romans 1:21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

Romans 1:23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Romans 1:24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,

Romans 1:25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Romans 1:26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

Romans 1:27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

Romans 1:29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,
Romans 1:30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
Romans 1:31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;
Romans 1:32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Samaria ought to have fared better but didn't. Still, God said that both Sodom and Samaria were not as bad as Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 16:51 "Samaria did not commit half of your sins; but you have multiplied your abominations more than they, and have justified your sisters by all the abominations which you have done.

Ezekiel 16:52 You who judged your sisters, bear your own shame also, because the sins which you committed were more abominable than theirs; they are more righteous than you. Yes, be disgraced also, and bear your own shame, because you justified your sisters.

Ezekiel 16:53 "When I bring back their captives, the captives of Sodom and her daughters, and the captives of Samaria and her daughters, then I will also bring back the captives of your captivity among them,

Ezekiel 16:54 that you may bear your own shame and be disgraced by all that you did when you comforted them.

Ezekiel 16:55 When your sisters, Sodom and her daughters, return to their former state, and Samaria and her daughters return to their former state, then you and your daughters will return to your former state.

Ezekiel 16:56 For your sister Sodom was not a byword in your mouth in the days of your pride,

Ezekiel 16:57 before your wickedness was uncovered. It was like the time of the reproach of the daughters of Syria and all those around her, and of the daughters of the Philistines, who despise you everywhere.

The talk about "bringing back" Sodom and Samaria is a gracious look forward to the kingdom of God on the earth after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The sins of the Jerusalem Jews were worse than those of pagans. The Jews knew God and, therefore, they knew better.

The sins of the Jerusalem Jews were worse than those of idolatrous Samaria. After all, the very presence of God dwelt in the Temple at Jerusalem.

The sins of a Christian are worse than those of the unsaved. We know better!

And they are worse than those of Samaria or Jerusalem. We have the indwelling presence and power of God.

There seems to be a tendency because we are under grace and not Law to think more lightly of sin. We need to have the heart of the apostle Paul who said, "Should we sin that grace might abound? *God forbid!*"

We've all seen Christian friends fall into sin and ruin their lives. They are like Samaritans to us in that we ought to learn from their bad example and judge ourselves before sin ruins something or someone in our lives.

Samaria eventually became the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. The Jews set up their own worship and patterned it after the worship of the Golden Calf in Egypt. We would say they went back to Egypt. Egypt is a type of the world, so they went back to the world.

Too many believers are calling Samaria their home by returning to the world. Don't follow their example as being 'cool' or 'progressive.' Learn from it and be warned to continue in the things of the Spirit.

As I said, we have a tendency to think more lightly of sin. Once exposed, we have a tendency to deal too harshly with it! We are hesitant to forgive unless folks jump through hoops.

We should not sin against grace. But when we sin, grace does abound! The woman brought to Jesus, exposed and deserving of stoning, was told to Go and sin no more. Grace forgave her and empowered her.

We need to get it right. Let's abhor sin and avoid it in our lives. Once it's exposed, let's "go" in the full forgiveness of Jesus Christ and "sin no more" in the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Ezekiel 16:58 You have paid for your lewdness and your abominations," says the Lord.
Ezekiel 16:59 For thus says the Lord God: "I will deal with you as you have done, who despised the oath by breaking the covenant.
Ezekiel 16:60 "Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.

As the chapter closes we are transported to the future of Israel and the Gentile nations. The Jews will have "paid for [their] lewdness and... abominations" and be restored.

God sees it as keeping His unconditional promises in a series of "covenants" God made with Israel. They are called by scholars the Abrahamic Covenant, the Palestinian Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the Davidic Covenant.

We don't have time to go into all of them now. Scholar J. Dwight Pentecost summarizes them by saying,

When the covenants are studied...we find [these] great features: (1) A nation forever, (2) a land forever, (3) a King forever, (4) a throne forever, [and] (5) a kingdom forever.

God has a plan, an eternal plan, for the nation of Israel. In the future He will keep all the unconditional promises in His prior covenants with them and He will initiate what is called the New Covenant.

It is described by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Jeremiah 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-
Jeremiah 31:32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.

Jeremiah 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Jeremiah 31:34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

The New Covenant guarantees that the Jews will be permanently restored to their land, experience a national conversion to Jesus Christ, be regenerated and receive a new spiritual heart. It happens at and after the Second Coming of Jesus.

The final verses of chapter sixteen anticipate the reaction of the Jews at Jesus' Second Coming.

Ezekiel 16:61 Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed, when you receive your older and your younger sisters; for I will give them to you for daughters, but not because of My covenant with you.

Ezekiel 16:62 And I will establish My covenant with you. Then you shall know that I am the Lord,

Ezekiel 16:63 that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I provide you an atonement for all you have done," says the Lord God.' "

When Jesus returns His people will receive Him. The Gentile nations will be restored along with the Jews. Jesus will rule and reign upon the earth for one thousand years from His throne in Jerusalem.

If the New Covenant is made by God with Israel, where do we fit in? The blessings of the New Covenant are promised to the physical descendants of Israel, but the unbelief of the Jews opened the door for Gentile evangelism. The age in which we live is sometimes called "the fulness of the Gentiles." In Romans 11:25 the believers of the Church Age are said to be graciously grafted in to the olive tree, which represents Israel. In other words, we experience the blessings of the New Covenant now.

When the “fulness of the Gentiles” has come to an end, God will return His focus to the Jews, and through the Great Tribulation He will save His chosen people.

We experience the spiritual blessings promised in the New Covenant with Israel right now but God is still dealing with Israel as a nation and will most definitely fulfill all His promises to the Jews.

The big question today, the question people are asking, is this: “Is the world coming to an end?”

No, not really. Not in the way people think. Prophecy is being fulfilled. The world is going to be refreshed, then recreated.

We are at the heart of it right now, living in constant anticipation of the imminent rapture of the church.

