

Ezekiel 16:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.

Analysis

But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. The allegory shifts dramatically from God grace to Israel unfaithfulness. The verse describes spiritual adultery—using God gifts for idolatry and alliances with pagan nations, betraying the exclusive covenant relationship.

But thou didst trust in thine own beauty marks the fatal turn. Instead of trusting God who gave the beauty, Israel trusted the gift itself. This is the essence of idolatry: making ultimate what should be penultimate, trusting creation over Creator. Their confidence shifted from God faithfulness to their own status and strength.

Playedst the harlot because of thy renown uses prostitution metaphor for idolatry. Rather than remaining faithful to covenant husband (God), Israel used her fame to attract other lovers (foreign gods and nations). Pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by indicates promiscuous, indiscriminate spiritual adultery with any and all available partners. His it was means she became possession of her lovers rather than God.

From Reformed perspective, this demonstrates how quickly human hearts turn from grace to works, from God to idols. Receiving blessing produces not gratitude

but pride, not faithfulness but wandering. This shows the comprehensive depth of human sin and the miracle that any remain faithful apart from sovereign grace.

Historical Context

This allegory reflects historical reality. After Solomon's death, Israel repeatedly formed alliances with pagan nations (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon) and adopted their religious practices. Rather than trusting Yahweh for security, they trusted political maneuvering and military alliances, inevitably adopting allies' gods as part of treaty relationships.

The prophets consistently condemned this pattern (Isaiah 30:1-3, 31:1-3, Jeremiah 2:18, 36:37, Hosea 5:13, 7:11, 8:9). Each alliance required religious accommodation—honoring allies' deities, building their shrines, participating in their cults. Political prostitution led to spiritual prostitution.

Archaeological evidence confirms widespread syncretism during the monarchy period. Figurines of foreign goddesses appear in Israelite sites; high places for Baal worship proliferated; even the Jerusalem temple was defiled with idols during various reigns (2 Kings 21:7, 23:4-12).

The metaphor of trusting in own beauty captures the pride that led to these alliances. Israel believed her status, wealth, and strategic location made her a desirable ally. She leveraged what God gave for political advantage, forgetting that security came from covenant obedience, not diplomatic maneuvering.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between trusting God versus trusting His gifts?

2. How does pride in spiritual blessings become pathway to idolatry and unfaithfulness?
3. In what ways do churches today prostitute themselves to cultural powers for acceptance and influence?
4. What does indiscriminate spiritual fornication teach about the nature of idolatry?
5. How does Christ exclusive claim on the church challenge all competing loyalties (2 Corinthians 11:2-3)?

Interlinear Text

וְתִבְטַח	בִּפְנֵי	וְתִזְבְּחַנָּה	עַל
But thou didst trust	in thine own beauty	and playedst the harlot	H5921
H982	H3308	H2181	
שְׁמָךְ	וְתִשְׁפַּךְ	אֶת	כָּל
because of thy renown	and pouredst out	thy fornications	H3605
H8034	H8210	H8457	H5921
עַזְבֵּךְ	לְכַלְלֵךְ		
on every one that passed by			
H5674	H0	H1961	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 57:8 (Parallel theme): Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance: for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee a covenant with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it.

Jeremiah 2:20 (Parallel theme): For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

Ezekiel 16:25 (Parallel theme): Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms.

Jeremiah 7:4 (Faith): Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.

Ezekiel 23:3 (Parallel theme): And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity.

Isaiah 1:21 (Faith): How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.

Ezekiel 23:8 (Parallel theme): Neither left she her whoredoms brought from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her.

Hosea 1:2 (Parallel theme): The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.

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