

Ezekiel 16:54

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them.

Analysis

That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them. The paradox of Jerusalem's judgment is that her gross sin makes even Sodom and Samaria look righteous by comparison. The Hebrew *kālam* (מְלָא, "be confounded") means to be publicly humiliated, disgraced. Jerusalem must **bear thine own shame**—carry the full weight of guilt without excuse or deflection. The phrase "a comfort unto them" uses Hebrew *tanhûmâ* (תָּנוּמָה), meaning consolation—but ironic consolation. Sodom and Samaria find "comfort" not in restoration but in the fact that Jerusalem's wickedness surpassed theirs.

This devastating verse exposes the sin of self-righteousness. Jerusalem presumed on covenant privilege while exceeding pagan nations in abominations—idolatry, child sacrifice, injustice. **Greater privilege brings greater accountability** (Luke 12:48). Jerusalem's judgment would be more severe precisely because she had received God's special revelation, temple presence, and covenant promises yet abandoned them. The irony cuts deep: the city chosen to be a light to nations became darker than the nations. This anticipates Jesus' pronouncement that Sodom would fare better in judgment than unrepentant cities that rejected His ministry (Matthew 10:15).

Historical Context

Ezekiel 16 presents Jerusalem as an unfaithful wife in an extended allegory. Written during the Babylonian exile (593-571 BC), the chapter traces Jerusalem from foundling infant (vv. 1-7) through lavish marriage to Yahweh (vv. 8-14) to brazen harlotry (vv. 15-34) to deserved judgment (vv. 35-43). Verses 44-63 compare Jerusalem unfavorably to her "sisters" Samaria (Northern Kingdom, destroyed 722 BC) and Sodom (destroyed in Abraham's time, Genesis 19). The comparison with Sodom was particularly shocking—the city synonymous with wickedness served as Jerusalem's moral superior. This rhetorical strategy shattered the exiles' complacency about their covenant status. Jerusalem had committed spiritual adultery through Canaanite Baalism, political adultery through foreign alliances, and literal murder through child sacrifice to Molech.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does spiritual privilege (church upbringing, biblical knowledge, Christian community) increase rather than diminish accountability for sin?
2. In what ways might your sin provide "comfort" to unbelievers by confirming their cynicism about Christianity's truthfulness?

Interlinear Text

וְנִכְלֶל מִתְּמִתָּה כִּלְפָתָת הַתְּשֵׁא וְלִמְעֵד
H4616 That thou mayest bear H5375 thine own shame H3639 and mayest be confounded H3637

אֲשֶׁר מִכְלָל עֲשֵׂית בְּנִיחַת הַתְּשֵׁא אַתָּה
H3605 in all that thou hast done H834 H6213 in that thou art a comfort H5162 H854

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 2:26 (Parallel theme): As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets,

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