

Homiletics Analysis: Ezekiel 16

Content & Intent

This Text — Content

Ezekiel 16 is the longest single chapter in the book and one of the most extended, sustained, and emotionally forceful allegorical indictments in all of Scripture. The LORD speaks directly to Jerusalem in the form of an extended marriage allegory that moves through five distinct phases: (1) Jerusalem's origins as an abandoned, unwanted infant left to die in an open field (vv. 1–5); (2) the LORD's sovereign act of finding, caring for, and entering into covenant with her, transforming her from a dying infant into a beloved bride adorned with extraordinary beauty and glory (vv. 6–14); (3) Jerusalem's comprehensive, aggressive, and ultimately absurd unfaithfulness — she does not merely drift into idolatry but weaponizes the very gifts the LORD gave her, turning them into instruments of worship offered to other gods, and goes further than any common prostitute by paying her lovers rather than receiving payment (vv. 15–34); (4) the LORD's announcement of the coming judgment — enacted through those very lovers turned against her — proportionate to and arising from the depth of her betrayal (vv. 35–52); and (5) the astonishing and sovereign close — not the story ending in deserved destruction, but the LORD declaring that He will remember and reinstate the covenant He swore in her youth, not because she deserves it but because He is bound by His own oath, and He will establish her as the elder sister over Samaria and Sodom in the new covenant He will make with her (vv. 53–63).

The chapter employs sustained metaphor with deliberate, accumulating intensity. It is not merely illustrative — it is prosecutorial. The LORD is building a case, document by document, act by act, gift by gift turned to betrayal. The movement from gift to ingratitude to active aggression against the giver is the theological spine of the chapter. Every section of the indictment amplifies one question: *How could this happen?* And the chapter's final turn amplifies another: *How is restoration even conceivable?*

This Text — Intent

God's intent through this chapter is to produce in the reader a felt sense of the full weight of Israel's covenant betrayal — not as an abstract doctrinal category (“sin,” “idolatry”) but as a relational rupture of staggering personal depth — and simultaneously to produce stunned, silenced wonder at the announcement that the covenant-keeping God will, by His own initiative and oath, restore what was shattered. The chapter is not designed primarily to produce grief, though grief is appropriate. It is designed to produce the specific response of verse 63: that she will “remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I atone for you for all that you have done.” The goal is a silenced, forgiven, awestruck people who know exactly what they are — and

exactly what God is. Behaviorally, the intent is repentance. Affectively, it is shame displaced by covenant mercy. Cognitively, it is the internalization of the radical asymmetry between human faithlessness and divine covenant fidelity.

Subject Sentence:

Jerusalem's covenant betrayal is total — and the LORD's covenant faithfulness is more total still.

Primary Claim:

God is confronting His people with the full, unflinching weight of their covenant infidelity so that, standing without excuse before the wreckage of their own choices, they will be silenced into wonder by His sovereign declaration that He will restore the covenant anyway — not because they deserve it but because He swore it.

Interpretive Evaluation

The nature and function of the allegory

The most basic interpretive question is whether this chapter is meant to be read as extended allegory, as literal history, or as some combination. The dominant hermeneutical consensus across traditions — Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist, Catholic — is that this is sustained allegorical prophecy: Jerusalem/Israel is the unfaithful wife; the LORD is the betrayed husband; the lovers are the foreign nations and their gods (Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, vv. 26–29); the children are the people offered to Molech (vv. 20–21). This is the reading demanded by the text's own internal signals — the narrative begins at a moment no historical “Jerusalem” can be literally identified with (an abandoned infant in an open field) and proceeds through stages no historical marriage can encompass. It is allegory doing the work of indictment — making the reader *feel* what a doctrinal recitation of covenant violations would not. The Reformed tradition's grammatical-historical reading confirms this: the allegorical register is the author's deliberately chosen instrument, and to flatten it into literalism or to dissolve it into mere “illustration” equally misses the point. The allegory *is* the argument.

The explicit sexual graphic content

Several Christian traditions have struggled with the graphic sexual language of the central section (particularly vv. 15–34, 36–37). Some interpreters, particularly in devotional and popular preaching traditions, soften or abbreviate the central indictment on grounds of propriety. This should be evaluated as a homiletical pitfall rather than a legitimate interpretive move. The text's explicitness is not incidental — it is proportionate to the

severity of the betrayal being described. The very discomfort the language produces in the reader is part of the text's rhetorical strategy. To sanitize the indictment is to sanitize the mercy that follows it. A Reformed reading acknowledges that the Spirit inspired this language with intent, that it is in the canon for good reason, and that a preacher has the responsibility to engage it honestly — with pastoral wisdom about audience — rather than to quietly omit it.

Verses 53–63 — Restoration as law or gospel?

The most significant interpretive divergence among orthodox traditions involves the restoration section (vv. 53–63). **Lutheran** interpreters, operating under the strict Law/Gospel hermeneutic, will read the indictment sections (vv. 1–52) as pure Law and the restoration section (vv. 53–63) as pure Gospel, with a clean transition between them. This reading is not wrong, but it can produce a too-rigid structural division that misses the way the LORD's sovereign mercy is already present in the indictment sections themselves (the gift-giving in vv. 6–14 is itself covenantal grace, not merely the setup for its betrayal).

Arminian/Wesleyan interpreters sometimes read the restoration as contingent — as God offering to restore the covenant if Jerusalem responds appropriately. The text resists this reading. The LORD says “I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant” (v. 60) — this is unilateral divine declaration, not conditional offer. The Hebrew is future-tense sovereign promise (*waw*-consecutive perfects in key verses), not conditional subjunctive. **Dispensational** readings frequently identify the restoration section with a future, literal, national restoration of ethnic Israel, distinct from the Church. While the New Covenant dimensions of this passage (v. 60–62 parallel Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 36:26–27) do carry forward into New Testament fulfillment, the immediate referent is covenantal Jerusalem — not exclusively a future ethnic-national entity. The Reformed reading, preferred here, is that this passage functions as a compressed typological pattern: the immediate referent is exilic-era Judah, but the New Covenant fulfillment in Christ (the one who “atones” in v. 63) is the passage's ultimate horizon, and the Church — as the covenant community — participates in this fulfillment. The atonement language of v. 63 (*kipper*, to atone/cover) is a genuine canonical anticipation of the cross. The Reformed reading does not require choosing between immediate-historical and eschatological-typological reference — the passage carries both registers simultaneously, which is characteristic of covenantal prophecy throughout Ezekiel and the Major Prophets.

The comparison with Samaria and Sodom (vv. 44–52)

Some interpreters (particularly those concerned with defending the moral reputation of Israel against all-comers) soften the Samaria/Sodom comparison, reading it as hyperbolic rhetoric rather than genuine moral evaluation. The text does not support this softening. The LORD is making a genuine argument: Jerusalem, having received greater covenant privilege than Samaria or Sodom, has sinned more grievously than both — a principle with clear New Testament correspondence in Luke 12:48 and Matthew 11:20–24. Greater privilege generates greater accountability. This is not hyperbole — it is the logic of covenant

proportionality. Reformed covenant theology handles this cleanly: the depth of sin is measured not merely by the act but by the covenant standing of the sinner. Jerusalem's sin was worse than Sodom's because Jerusalem knew more, received more, and therefore owed more.

The Reformed verdict: This chapter is an extended covenantal indictment and restoration oracle, delivered through sustained allegory with deliberate prosecutorial and pastoral force. Its graphic dimensions are intentional. Its restoration section is unilaterally sovereign. Its atonement language anticipates the cross. The appropriate response it intends to produce — a silenced, atoned-for, shame-bearing people who never open their mouths again in self-justification — is the response of every believer who has fully understood the gospel.

Key Canonical Support

- **Genesis 2:21–25; Hosea 1–3** — The marriage covenant as the paradigm of God's relationship with His people is established early (Genesis 2) and runs throughout the prophets (Hosea 1–3 is the closest structural parallel to Ezekiel 16 — God commanding Hosea to embody the covenant betrayal and its restoration in his own marriage). Ezekiel 16 assumes this whole tradition.
 - **Deuteronomy 7:6–8; 9:4–6** — The LORD's election of Israel grounded not in Israel's worthiness but in His own sovereign love and oath — the theological bedrock of the restoration section (vv. 53–63). "It was not because you were more in number... it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers" (Deut. 7:7–8).
 - **Jeremiah 31:31–34** — The New Covenant promise that explicitly addresses the failure of the old covenant ("not like the covenant that I made with their fathers... my covenant that they broke") and announces God's unilateral act of writing the law on the heart. Ezekiel 16:60–62 is a parallel oracle; together they provide the Old Testament's fullest prophetic anticipation of the cross-secured covenant.
 - **Romans 3:3–4; 5:8** — The New Testament's direct exposition of the theological logic running through Ezekiel 16: "Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar" (Rom. 3:3–4). "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" — the enacted atonement that v. 63's *kipper* anticipates.
 - **Revelation 19:6–9; 21:2** — The eschatological completion of the marriage covenant metaphor: the unfaithful bride made the pure Bride of the Lamb, the New Jerusalem descending "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Ezekiel 16 is the nadir of the bride's story; Revelation 19 and 21 are its culmination.
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Aim:

To bring readers face to face with the staggering specificity of their own covenant betrayal, and then to silence their self-defense with the announcement that the same God who named every act of infidelity has atoned for every one of them — not because of anything in them, but because He swore it.

Content Table

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
1–2	The LORD commands Ezekiel to make known to Jerusalem her abominations — direct, frontal address	The command formula frames everything that follows as prosecutorial speech
3	Jerusalem’s origins identified: Canaanite by birth, Amorite father, Hittite mother	Deliberately lowly, pagan origins — no inherent dignity or covenant standing in herself
4–5	At birth, not cleansed, not salted, not swaddled — cast out into the open field, unwanted, left to die	An infant of maximum vulnerability and zero social standing — no claim on anyone
6	The LORD passes by, sees her dying, and speaks life: “Live!”	Sovereign, gratuitous act — the entire covenant relationship initiates in divine command, not human merit
7	She grows, develops, reaches full maturity — but still naked and bare	Covenant life given, but not yet adorned — the metaphor of progressive gift-giving begins
8	The LORD passes by again, sees her ready for love, spreads his garment over her, enters covenant with her — “you became mine”	The marriage covenant sealed — the phrase “spread the corner of my garment” is the formal betrothal act (cf. Ruth 3:9)
9	The LORD bathes her, washes away the blood, anoints her with oil	Cleansing as gift — begins the catalogue of divine grace
10–11	Clothed in embroidered cloth, fine leather sandals,	Progressive adornment — the catalogue lengthens to

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
	linen, silk — adorned with bracelets, necklace	emphasize the deliberateness and comprehensiveness of the gift
12	A ring in her nose, earrings in her ears, a crown on her head	The crown: she is made royally beautiful — the pinnacle of adornment
13	Her beauty was built entirely from his gifts: gold, silver, fine linen, silk, embroidered cloth; she ate fine flour, honey, oil and became exceedingly beautiful	Climactic summary: “your beauty was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you, declares the Lord GOD” — total derivative beauty
14	Her fame spread among the nations on account of her beauty — because the LORD’s own splendor was given to her	The nations recognized her beauty. The source of her beauty is named one final time before the betrayal begins
15	“But you trusted in your beauty” — the pivot word: she used the fame the LORD gave her to play the whore	The exact sin: she took what was derivative (gifted beauty) and treated it as her own autonomous possession — the universal idolatrous move
16	She took her garments (his gifts) and made colorful shrines for idols	His gifts repurposed as instruments of worship to other gods — maximally offensive
17	Took his gold and silver and made male images and played the whore with them	His material gifts become the physical materials of idols
18	Set his embroidered garments before idols, offered his oil and incense to them	Worship materials redirected — the specific enumeration makes the indictment concrete and cumulative
19	His fine flour, oil, and honey set before idols as pleasing aroma	Even the food he provided became sacrifice to other gods
20–21	She took the children she	The escalation to child

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
	bore to him and sacrificed them to idols as food	sacrifice — described without rhetorical softening: “Is this too little for your whoredom?”
22	In all these abominations, she did not remember the days of her youth — her abandonment, her blood, her dying	The sin is named as amnesia: she forgot the story of what she was before he found her
23–25	Built elevated shrines at every street corner and every crossroads — offering herself to every passerby	Indiscriminate, aggressive, public idolatry — architectural and deliberate
26	Went to the Egyptians (large flesh) — played the harlot with them and multiplied her whoredom	Political-religious alliance with Egypt; sexual metaphor for dependence on foreign power
27	The LORD stretched out his hand and diminished her portion, delivering her to the Philistines — yet even they were ashamed of her	Preliminary judgment already inflicted — her own former enemies blushed at her behavior
28–29	Then to the Assyrians — still not satisfied. Then to Babylon (the land of traders) — still not satisfied	The escalating, insatiable quality of the idolatry — no political alliance or religious system satisfied
30	“How sick is your heart,” declares the Lord GOD — the LORD’s anguished evaluation	One of the most direct expressions of divine grievance in the chapter
31–34	Unlike a prostitute, she gave gifts to her lovers rather than receiving payment — she paid them to come to her	The unique perversity of Jerusalem’s sin: normal prostitutes receive wages; she paid to sin. She was worse than a common prostitute because she wanted the sin for its own sake
35–37	Therefore, the LORD will gather all her lovers — those she delighted in and those	Judgment enacted through the very nations she courted

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
	she hated — and expose her before them	— poetic justice
38–39	Judged as adulterers and those who shed blood are judged; handed over to the nations who will strip, destroy, and leave her naked	The stripping of the gifts she prostituted — what was given in love is taken back through judgment
40–41	The assembly will stone her, cut her with swords, and burn her houses	Military destruction as the form of covenant-breaking judgment
42	“So will I satisfy my wrath on you, and my jealousy will depart from you; I will be calm, and will no more be angry.”	The exhaustion of divine jealousy — judgment is not God’s final word but it is a real word
43	“Because you did not remember the days of your youth but have enraged me with all these things, behold, I will return your deeds upon your head”	Amnesia named again as the root: she forgot her beginning
44–45	The proverb applied: “Like mother, like daughter” — she is the daughter of her Hittite/Amorite parentage after all	Ironical inversion: she returned to her pagan origins rather than her covenant identity
46–48	Her elder sister Samaria, her younger sister Sodom — she has exceeded both in her abominations	The scandal: Jerusalem was more corrupt than the cities legendary for their wickedness
49–50	Sodom’s sins described: pride, excess of food, prosperous ease, failure to aid the poor, haughtiness, abominations	Not merely sexual sin — structural pride, neglect of the vulnerable, and haughtiness before God
51–52	Even Samaria did not commit half of Jerusalem’s sins — Jerusalem made her sisters look righteous	The rhetorical climax of the comparison section — Jerusalem bears her shame and must justify her sisters
53–55	Yet the LORD will restore the	Restoration announced for

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
56–58	fortunes of Sodom and her daughters, Samaria and her daughters, and Jerusalem and her daughters with them Jerusalem had not even mentioned Sodom in the day of her pride — now she herself bears the consequences	all three — Jerusalem the most culpable is included in the most comprehensive restoration Proportionality: the proud are humbled; those who looked down on others face the same judgment
59–60	“Because you have not remembered the days of your youth... yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant”	The pivot: her forgetting met by his remembering — unilateral divine action, not conditioned on her memory
61	“Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed, when you receive your sisters, both your elder and your younger; I will give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you”	Her shame comes <i>after</i> his initiative, not before it — shame is the result of grace, not the precondition of it
62	“I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD”	Covenant re-establishment as revelation — she will <i>know</i> who He is through this act
63	“That you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I atone for you for all that you have done, declares the Lord GOD”	The final word: <i>kipper</i> — atonement. The covenant is not merely renewed — it is secured by a definitive act of divine covering. The appropriate human response is silenced, forgiven shame.

Divisions Table

Division	Verses	Label
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Division	Verses	Label
1	1–5	The Abandoned Infant: Jerusalem’s Origins Before Grace
2	6–14	The Sovereign Gift: From Dying Infant to Adorned Bride
3	15–34	The Total Betrayal: Every Gift Turned Against the Giver
4	35–52	The Coming Judgment: The Lovers Turned Executioners
5	53–63	The Impossible Restoration: The Covenant Remembered by the One Who Was Forgotten

Subject Sentence & Primary Claim (*restated*)

Subject Sentence: Jerusalem’s covenant betrayal is total — and the LORD’s covenant faithfulness is more total still.

Primary Claim: God is confronting His people with the full, unflinching weight of their covenant infidelity so that, standing without excuse before the wreckage of their own choices, they will be silenced into wonder by His sovereign declaration that He will restore the covenant anyway — not because they deserve it but because He swore it.

Applications (Five)

1. Recognize that the gifts you have treated as your own were never yours to begin with. (*Mind/Belief*)

The central move of Jerusalem’s apostasy was not simply worshipping other gods — it was taking what was derivative (beauty, clothing, food, gold) and treating it as autonomous possession to be deployed according to her own desires. The same move runs through every form of human idolatry: intelligence, talent, health, reputation, wealth, family — received as gifts, reinterpreted as ownership, weaponized for self-glorification or redirected to lesser goods. Ezekiel 16:13 names the precise moment of cognitive collapse: “your beauty was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you.” Every good thing in your life carries that label. To believe it is to be guarded against the idolatrous pivot at verse 15. The first application of this chapter is not behavioral — it is a reorientation of ownership. What have you received that you have quietly reclassified as your own?

2. Let the specific, cumulative enumeration of what God gave produce genuine grief over what you have done with it. (*Affections/Worship*)

The LORD did not merely say “you were unfaithful.” He traced, gift by gift and act by act, the specific progression from received grace to enacted betrayal. The embroidered clothes. The gold and silver. The fine flour and honey. The children. He named every one. This is not gratuitous — it is pastoral. The grief that leads to repentance is not generic guilt but the specific, sickening recognition: *this gift, which he gave me, I used to do that*. The chapter is designed to produce this specific kind of mourning — not vague spiritual sadness but the focused, itemized grief of someone who can no longer claim ignorance about the nature of what they have done. Sit with the catalogue. Do not rush to the restoration. Let the Spirit do the prosecutorial work the text intends before you offer the comfort the text provides.

3. See your sin as the LORD sees it — not as a failure of willpower but as a relational rupture of staggering personal depth. (*Mind/Belief*)

The allegory exists to reframe how the covenant-breaker understands their own condition. Sin is not, in the first instance, moral failure, rule-breaking, or spiritual underperformance. It is what verses 15–34 describe: taking the love, gifts, and covenant of a personally present God and actively redirecting them to substitutes. The LORD’s question in verse 30 — “How sick is your heart?” — is not rhetorical contempt. It is diagnostic anguish. The person who thinks of their idolatry as “struggling with X” or “a bad habit” has not yet understood what Ezekiel 16 is saying. The chapter insists on the relational register: this was covenant betrayal, committed against a person who loved you, by someone who knew what they were doing (v. 43: “you did not remember... but have enraged me”). The application is cognitive: stop euphemizing your sin and call it what the LORD calls it. This is the beginning of the silence of verse 63.

4. Abandon every defense and every comparative self-justification. (*Affections/Worship*)

The Sodom comparison (vv. 44–52) dismantles the most common psychological refuge in the face of conviction: “at least I’m not as bad as...” Jerusalem had made exactly this comparison (v. 56: “Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth in the day of your pride?”). She had used the wickedness of others as the floor beneath which she would not sink. The LORD removed the floor. Greater privilege means greater accountability; greater gifts mean greater culpability in their betrayal. The affective application is this: every time the Spirit begins to convict, the instinct is to begin comparing, excusing, and contextualizing. This chapter was written to silence that instinct permanently. The response God is after (v. 63) is a person who “never opens their mouth again because of their shame” — not a person who negotiates their relative standing. The gospel does not need your improved self-assessment. It needs your silence.

5. Live as someone who has been atoned for — not merely forgiven but covered by a covenant God cannot break. (*Will/Behavior*)

The final verse does not call Jerusalem to try again, do better, or recommit to the covenant. It announces what the LORD will do: *I will atone for you*. The Hebrew *kipper* — the same root as the Day of Atonement — signals a definitive, completed act of divine covering. The behavioral implication is not “keep your covenantal obligations more carefully.” It is: live as someone who has been unconditionally and permanently covered. The restoration of verse 60–62 is an everlasting covenant — not a renegotiated contract with better performance clauses. The practical question this poses is: are you living as someone the LORD has sworn to keep, or are you living as someone whose standing depends on daily renegotiation? The silenced, shame-bearing, atoned-for life of verse 63 is not a miserable life — it is the freest possible life, because it is a life that no longer has anything to prove, defend, or earn. Live from that covering, not toward it.

Theological Importance

Theological Importance:

Ezekiel 16 teaches with unmistakable force that the covenant between the LORD and His people is asymmetrical in both directions — in the depth of human betrayal and in the unconditional sovereignty of divine faithfulness. God’s covenantal love is not responsive to human merit — it was established when Jerusalem was a dying, unwanted infant (v. 6) and it is re-established when Jerusalem is a shamed, judged, inexcusable adulteress (v. 60). The theological heart of the chapter is the LORD’s “I will remember” against the background of Israel’s repeated failure to remember (vv. 22, 43, 60–61): divine covenant memory does not depend on human covenant memory, and divine covenant fidelity is not neutralized by human covenant infidelity. The chapter also grounds the reality of divine wrath — not as temperamental instability but as the necessary response of covenant love to covenant betrayal. Holy love that responds to betrayal with indifference is not love at all. The jealousy of verse 42 and its eventual satisfaction through judgment is a moral necessity built into the nature of the covenant. And the atonement of verse 63 teaches that the only way forward — the only way the covenant can be both honored and restored — is through a definitive act of divine covering that satisfies the covenant’s demands and secures its future simultaneously.

Reformed Theological Significance

Reformed Theological Significance:

Ezekiel 16 is a canonical anchor for several central Reformed convictions about grace. The sovereign, unconditional election of verse 6 — the LORD choosing a dying, pagan, zero-merit infant — is pure common-grace display escalating to saving-grace covenant: she brought nothing, contributed nothing, and the LORD initiated everything. This is the grammar of Reformed soteriology narrated in sustained metaphor. The passage equally

grounds the Reformed understanding of total depravity not merely as moral weakness but as covenantal treachery — the creature actively weaponizing the Creator’s gifts against Him is precisely the logic of Romans 1:21–23, and Ezekiel 16 shows it at covenant-community scale. Most significantly, the atonement language of verse 63 (*kipper*) functions typologically as the Old Testament’s compressed announcement that the covenant’s restoration will require a definitive act of divine covering — not merely moral reform or renewed commitment. Reformed theology reads this as an anticipation of the cross: the one act in which God simultaneously satisfies the covenant’s demands and secures its everlasting future for an undeserving people. The New Covenant of verse 60 is the same covenant announced in Jeremiah 31 and enacted in the blood of Christ (Luke 22:20). Reformed preaching on this passage therefore does not merely call people to remember their covenant obligations — it announces the Covenant-Keeper who atones for every instance in which they have forgotten.

Main Takeaway

You were found dying, adorned beyond measure, and you took every gift and turned it against the giver. You have no defense and no comparison that holds. And the LORD — the one you betrayed — says: *I will remember my covenant. I will atone for all that you have done.* The only appropriate response is silence: the silence of someone who has nothing to say because everything has already been said, and covered, and sworn. Stop trying to renegotiate your standing. You have been atoned for. Live from that.

Preaching/Teaching Pitfalls

- **Softening the indictment to protect the audience from discomfort.** The graphic sexual imagery and the explicit child sacrifice references are present in the text by divine design. A preacher who abbreviates the central indictment because it is uncomfortable has removed the theological floor beneath the restoration section. The mercy of verses 53–63 is only as staggering as the betrayal of verses 15–52 is honest. Do not protect your congregation from this text — bring them into it. Pastoral wisdom governs *how* the content is presented; it does not justify omitting it.
- **Treating the restoration as conditional.** The single most common mishandling of the second half of this chapter is reading the restoration as God offering to restore the relationship *if* Jerusalem repents. The text does not support this. “I will establish for you an everlasting covenant” (v. 60) is unilateral declaration. Verse 61 explicitly says she will remember and be ashamed *after* and *because of* the restoration — shame is the result of grace, not its precondition. Preaching this as “God is willing to take you back if you come back to him” misses the point entirely. The text says: *I will do this. Then you will be ashamed. Then your mouth will be stopped.*

- **Moralizing the allegory into behavioral checklists.** The allegorical form exists specifically to prevent the application from being reduced to “stop doing bad things and start doing good things.” The chapter’s intent is to reframe the nature of sin (covenantal betrayal), reframe the nature of grace (unconditional sovereign mercy), and produce a specific response (silenced, atoned-for shame-turned-wonder). A sermon that ends with five steps to covenant faithfulness has worked against the chapter’s own intent.
- **Neglecting the Christological telos of verse 63.** The *kipper* of verse 63 is not a vague divine generosity — it is a specific, covenantal, sacerdotal word. Preaching this chapter without tracing that atonement to its fulfillment in Christ leaves the most important question — *how does this atonement actually work?* — unanswered. Ezekiel 16 points toward a definitive act of divine covering; the New Testament announces where and how that act occurred. Reformed preaching should not leave the congregation at the Old Testament announcement without the New Testament fulfillment.
- **Using the Sodom comparison for cultural apologetics rather than self-examination.** Preachers who note that Sodom’s sins in verses 49–50 include pride and neglect of the poor sometimes use this to score contemporary cultural points about what Sodom “really” means. While the text does genuinely expand Sodom’s sin beyond sexual immorality, the purpose of the Sodom comparison in context is not cultural commentary — it is to indict Jerusalem. The rhetorical target of the passage is the covenant community standing in the place of greatest privilege and greatest culpability. Turn the text on its actual target: the people of God who have received more, and therefore owed more, and therefore sinned more grievously in their betrayal.
- **Rushing to the restoration before sitting in the indictment.** The chapter is structured so that the extended, accumulating indictment (vv. 1–52) prepares the ground for the restoration announcement (vv.