

Knowing yourself, knowing God. Ezekiel 16

Introduction – Shocking to cause a rethink

We are about to listen to Ezekiel 16, a chapter one commentator on Ezekiel [Chris Wright] has described as long, lewd and with language that is in places frankly pornographic, evoking images of ‘the most vulgar sexual depravity and the most horrendous graphic violence’ p. 127

The English translations, and particularly the ESV, tones it down a little but it is hard to listen to. It was even harder, even more confronting, for Ezekiel’s first hearers, those exiles of Jerusalem now living beside the Chebar canal in Babylonia.

God here, and it is the LORD speaking – you will hear throughout the passage ‘thus says the Lord’, or ‘declares the Lord’

God here speaks with passion about Jerusalem’s and the people of Israel’s, relationship with Him.

In this first reading – a long one, going through to v. 43, he describes that relationship by an allegory, a story of a marriage that has many correspondences with events in Israel’s history.

He will speak of Israel’s origin, of their betrothal and marriage to Him, and then of the people’s disgraceful unfaithfulness and the consequences of that unfaithfulness.

He speaks this way – and it is powerful – to get the exiles to rethink how they see themselves, to rethink where the issues are in their relationship with Him, their God.

Their view was that they were in exile, had been defeated by the Babylonians, because the LORD had let them down.

They were His special people, a people better than a lot of others, and the LORD was meant to protect them, Jerusalem, and His land, whatever happened. They had maintained His temple and made sacrifices, so if He is any God at all He would defend His city and bring His people back to it soon.

They were disappointed in the LORD, waiting for Him to come good.

And they were stubborn in their views, people with a ‘hard forehead and stubborn heart’ [3:7]

So the LORD gives this shocking story to help them rethink, to come to see their relationship and behaviour and its consequences as He sees it

And He will follow that in vv. 44-58 by a shocking comparison with neighbours they looked down on, considered themselves superior to

Before in vv. 59-63 giving them a real hope in Him as they trade their stubborn pride for a life giving shame

Ezekiel 16 is also an opportunity for us to think about how we see ourselves in relationship to God, about whether we see ourselves as God sees us, whether we have bolstered our sense of our own goodness by false comparisons, whether we have found a real hope in the God who humbles Himself speak to us in ways that can get through to us, to give us this verbal defibrillator to shock us into life.

So listen as /Jane reads to us

Ezekiel 16:1-43 – Rethinking Israel’s history

Ezekiel 16: Again the word of the LORD came to me: ² “Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, ³ and say, Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. ⁴ And as for your birth, on the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. ⁵ No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you, but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born.

⁶ “And when I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ ⁷ I made you flourish like a plant of the field. And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full adornment. Your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare.

⁸ “When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord God, and you became mine. ⁹ Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. ¹⁰ I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with fine leather. I wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk. ¹¹ And I adorned you with ornaments and

put bracelets on your wrists and a chain on your neck. ¹² And I put a ring on your nose and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³ Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen and silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. ¹⁴ And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you, declares the Lord God.

¹⁵ *“But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby; your beauty became his. ¹⁶ You took some of your garments and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore. The like has never been, nor ever shall be. ¹⁷ You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men, and with them played the whore. ¹⁸ And you took your embroidered garments to cover them, and set my oil and my incense before them. ¹⁹ Also my bread that I gave you—I fed you with fine flour and oil and honey—you set before them for a pleasing aroma; and so it was, declares the Lord God. ²⁰ And you took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your whorings so small a matter ²¹ that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them? ²² And in all your abominations and your whorings you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, wallowing in your blood.*

²³ *“And after all your wickedness (woe, woe to you! declares the Lord God), ²⁴ you built yourself a vaulted chamber and made yourself a lofty place in every square. ²⁵ At the head of every street you built your lofty place and made your beauty an abomination, offering yourself to any passerby and multiplying your whoring. ²⁶ You also played the whore with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger. ²⁷ Behold, therefore, I stretched out my hand against you and diminished your allotted portion and delivered you to the greed of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior. ²⁸ You played the whore also with the Assyrians, because you were not satisfied; yes, you played the whore with them, and still you were not satisfied. ²⁹ You multiplied your whoring also with the trading land of Chaldea, and even with this you were not satisfied.*

³⁰ *“How sick is your heart, declares the Lord God, because you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen prostitute, ³¹ building your vaulted chamber at the head of every street, and making your lofty place in every square. Yet you were*

not like a prostitute, because you scorned payment.³² Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband!³³ Men give gifts to all prostitutes, but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from every side with your whorings.³⁴ So you were different from other women in your whorings. No one solicited you to play the whore, and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; therefore you were different.

³⁵ “Therefore, O prostitute, hear the word of the LORD: ³⁶ Thus says the Lord God, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your whorings with your lovers, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them, ³⁷ therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you hated. I will gather them against you from every side and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness. ³⁸ And I will judge you as women who commit adultery and shed blood are judged, and bring upon you the blood of wrath and jealousy. ³⁹ And I will give you into their hands, and they shall throw down your vaulted chamber and break down your lofty places. They shall strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful jewels and leave you naked and bare. ⁴⁰ They shall bring up a crowd against you, and they shall stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. ⁴¹ And they shall burn your houses and execute judgments upon you in the sight of many women. I will make you stop playing the whore, and you shall also give payment no more. ⁴² So will I satisfy my wrath on you, and my jealousy shall depart from you. I will be calm and will no more be angry. ⁴³ Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but have enraged me with all these things, therefore, behold, I have returned your deeds upon your head, declares the Lord God. Have you not committed lewdness in addition to all your abominations?

Quite a retelling of their national history.

Their origin wasn't from pious Abraham and Sarah, but – and this was true of Jerusalem which was a Canaanite city for centuries before David conquered it – from callous pagans like their neighbours.

There was nothing special about them. In fact they were abandoned and helpless, only coming into life, existing, because of the LORD's free decision that they live vv. 6-7.

And they flourish only because of the LORD's decision to protect and provide for them.

In the story he enters into a marriage covenant with them, and in history the LORD committed Himself to the people HE rescued at Sinai, and entered into covenant with them there. And like marriage that was meant to be an exclusive relationship, Israel his bride.

And in the story the woman is beautified and ennobled by the provision and love of the LORD her husband, exalted as a splendid queen, just as Israel was given the land and made secure in it through David, and rose to prominence and power under Solomon.

It was all the LORD's doing, all the LORD's provision.

But what does this wilful bride do?

She does the unthinkable and embarks on a life of unfaithfulness. Not just a one off romance, but she promiscuously prostitutes herself, persistently, repeatedly.

vv. 15-22 look at her religious prostitution over the years, going after other gods, using what the LORD had given her, taking His good gifts, to betray Him.

And it climaxes in child sacrifice – taking the LORD's children, for every Israelite was His, and killing them. This really happened, practiced in the times of Ahaz [2 Kings 16:3] and Manasseh [2 Chronicles 33:6], Israel behaving just like the pagan nations the LORD had driven out from the land of Canaan [Lev. 18:21, 20:1-5]

Do you start to feel the offence of Israel's behaviour? My children. Do you feel the fury you would experience if someone sacrificed your children?

Then in vv. 23-29 the LORD looks at their political promiscuity, their turning to other nations – Egypt [Zedekiah Ezk. 17], Assyria [Ahaz Is. 7], Chaldea – that is Babylon [Hezekiah 2 Kings 20:12-19], instead of turning to the LORD. To enter into an alliance in those days involved also relying on the gods of those nations, who were seen as the source of the nation's strength. Israel repeatedly compromised for wealth, influence worldly security.

And then in vv. 30-34 the LORD summarises both the stupidity and offence of their repeated actions. Their idolatry neither enriched nor ennobled, but demeaned and impoverished – she paid her lovers.

But it also intensifies the offence. This bride would rather pay for other lovers than return to her husband so greatly she detested Him. Hers is a determination to shame the LORD, lavishing his gifts to her on her lovers.

What does that behaviour deserve?

She has plainly despised, repudiated her marriage covenant, shamed her husband.

She has shed innocent blood.

The LORD, the betrayed and despised husband, will give her what she deserves, will 'return her deeds upon her head'. IN the picture it is giving her up to her lovers to enact His punishment, and for her capital crimes – adultery and bloodshed, she will receive destruction and death.

There is horror in the picture, but those listening would not doubt it to be deserved for her behaviour, behaviour that the LORD is determined to stop. And they would not think this wife had any call on her husband, any claim any longer on His protection.

The LORD in this story is inviting the exiles to see Israel's behaviour, their behaviour, their persistent unfaithfulness, for what it is, and to see the coming judgment of Jerusalem's destruction as deserved.

He is inviting them to see that the problem in the relationship is not Him, but them, to see that the way they have behaved means the covenant they claimed to rely on has been set aside and they had no claim on the LORD's protection and provision.

Israel's story is especially bad, because they had been the recipients of the LORD's special blessing, had been given His covenant, made His special people.

But it is not unique.

What's the cause of our problem with God?

It is the story of humanity.

We have been, each one of us, given life by God.

And He is the source of all the good we enjoy – He has shown us kindness in sustaining the regularity and fruitfulness of the world, giving us food and shelter, allowing human life to flourish and develop

But we turn His good gifts against Him

We take our tongues, His good gift of language, and tell lies about Him

We take His good gift of sex, and use it to enslave ourselves and others to our lust,

We take His good gift of intelligence, and seek to construct world views that exclude Him from the world

We claim ourselves to be the source of our life and wealth, and give Him no thanks

And at the same time many say God should do this or that for us, and we have a right to be disappointed in God when things go wrong, shake our fists at Him and say if He was really God He would never let drought, or fire, or earthquake, or war happen to us.

This story asks you to see yourself differently, to think that the problem in the relationship is you, your failure to acknowledge the living Creator God, to give Him thanks and trust.

And sometimes this story is the story of those who say they are believers

Who are going through the motions – doing the right thing they say, going to church, even reading their bibles

But who have traded loyalty to God to pursue wealth, or influence, or being well thought of by their peers

Or who have come to trust in and pride themselves on their own goodness, their own keeping the rules, putting their trust in themselves to be right with God

And they experience hardship and complain, say the Lord has let them down, and have forgotten they are sinners,

But Ezekiel is not done yet.

So often we reinforce our own sense of our goodness, our deserving, by comparing ourselves to others

We are not as bad as them – and you can fill in the ‘them’

Jerusalem and its inhabitants did that

We are not as bad as Sodom whom the Lord destroyed

We are not as bad as Samaria, whom the Lord destroyed

Ezekiel is about to turn that comparison on its head.

Ezekiel 16:44-58 – Rethinking Israel’s comparisons

Ezekiel 16:⁴⁴ “Behold, everyone who uses proverbs will use this proverb about you: ‘Like mother, like daughter.’⁴⁵ You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite.⁴⁶ And your elder sister is Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you, is Sodom with her daughters.⁴⁷ Not only did you walk in their ways and do according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways.⁴⁸ As I live, declares the Lord God, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done.⁴⁹ Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.⁵⁰ They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it.⁵¹ Samaria has not committed half your sins. You have committed more abominations than they, and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the abominations that you have committed.⁵² Bear your disgrace, you also, for you have intervened on behalf of your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.

⁵³ “I will restore their fortunes, both the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters, and the fortunes of Samaria and her daughters, and I will restore your own fortunes in their midst,⁵⁴ that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all that you have done, becoming a consolation to them.⁵⁵ As for your sisters, Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former state, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former state, and you and your daughters shall return to your former state.⁵⁶ Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth in the day of your pride,⁵⁷ before your wickedness was uncovered? Now

you have become an object of reproach for the daughters of Syria and all those around her, and for the daughters of the Philistines, those all around who despise you. ⁵⁸ *You bear the penalty of your lewdness and your abominations, declares the LORD.*

Again, shocking for Ezekiel's first hearers.

Those notoriously wicked and judged peoples – sisters. The LORD is saying to them you are not special, you belong to the same family, share the same character.

And the LORD says to the Israelites – you have made them look good v.51

*So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for **you have made your sisters appear righteous.***

By being worse than them

⁴⁷ *Not only did you walk in their ways and do according to their abominations; **within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways.***

Ezekiel doesn't enlarge on Samaria's sin – that was still recent history.

But he does pause over Sodom. Like us they probably thought of the story of attempted homosexual gang rape in Genesis 19 when they thought of Sodom.

But that was just the culminating expression of their pride and lust.

Listen again to Ezekiel's description of their sin

⁴⁹ *Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.*

⁵⁰ *They were haughty and did an abomination before me.*

That could be a description of the society in which we live, in which we share

We are prosperous, but there are many homeless, many indigenous people still live in poverty, we oppress asylum seekers who have come by boat, and routinely dismiss the concerns of our poorer neighbours in the region

And believers – do we disturb our ease for those who are gospel poor, who are living life and dying without hearing in a way they can engage with the gospel truth that can enrich them and give them life.

But the point of Ezekiel's comparison is that Jerusalem is worse, worse than Sodom

Worse in her ingratitude, worse in her promiscuous idolatry, worse in her bloodshed.

Yet the LORD here hints at a hope – not just for Israel, but for her despised sisters Sodom and Samaria.

⁵³ *“I will restore their fortunes, both the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters, and the fortunes of Samaria and her daughters, and I will restore your own fortunes in their midst,*

But even this hope humbles the Israelites.

Hope for them is found only in the context of hope for their despised neighbours, people they looked down as on fully deserving of the judgment they received.

This is hope for sinners, a promise of a mercy, a restoration, that will be based on grace, not deserving, not because they are special.

And this will be a restoration that involves life from the dead, for Sodom and Samaria are well and truly gone, that is, a hope found only in a gracious God who alone can give life to the dead

There will either be good news for all sinners, or good news for none

Now their wickedness is uncovered v. 57 the hope of Israel can be found only in what can save their sinful neighbours as well

Are you better?

How many of us bolster our sense of deserving, our sense that we are good people and therefore God owes us His favour, on comparing ourselves to others?

We are better than that person who has left his wife, that person who cheats at work, that person who bullies at school, that person who is so ignorant

I know I am not perfect, in fact that confession just shows what a good person I am, but I am better than

Believers can be especially prone to this.

We are serious about doing the right thing

Work at our families, scrupulous about keeping the law, paying our tax

We are sure we are more deserving

And we forget what our pride, our self righteousness, our mean gossip, our envy

Deserve

Until the Lord uncovers our sin, lets us see our lives, our hearts, as He sees them

But there is hope, and Ezekiel returns to that hope in the final verses. Let's listen

Ezekiel 16:59-63 – Rethinking Hope

Ezekiel 16:⁵⁹ "For thus says the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant,⁶⁰ yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant.⁶¹ Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and I give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you.⁶² I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD,⁶³ that you may remember and be confounded, 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."

This hope is beyond the judgement v. 59 that Israel deserves for despising 'the oath in breaking the covenant'. It is not a hope found in God abandoning His justice.

But the covenant He upholds in bringing its punishments was also a covenant that promised restoration for repentance [Lev. 26:40-45, Deut 4:29-31, 30:1-10, Jer. 31:31-34].

You have heard a lot of Scripture this morning/evening, but let me read to you some of Lev. 26, that chapter that speaks of the punishment Israel would face for abandoning the covenant.

Leviticus 26:⁴⁰ "But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me,⁴¹ so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity,⁴² then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I

will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. ⁴³ But the land shall be abandoned by them and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my rules and their soul abhorred my statutes. ⁴⁴ Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God. ⁴⁵ But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.”

He will establish, or cause to stand, an everlasting covenant. This is not a new covenant. It is the promises that the LORD made to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, promises that their descendants would be the LORD's people, promises that say that in Abraham and His seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

The LORD is determined that not even Israel's gross and disgraceful sin will frustrate His promise, but it will be fulfilled through showing grace to sinners. Those notoriously sinful nations, Samaria and Sodom will be included, pictured as Jerusalem's daughters, giving to Jerusalem, Israel, the central place in the LORD's fulfilling this promise. They will be included 'Not on account of the covenant with you' v. 61, not as a reward for Israel's obedience to the covenant, but because God will keep His promise and to keep His promise to Abraham, to include Israel, there will be, must be, grace, mercy, to sinners.

In fact that grace will mean Israel will finally be forced to confess that their God is the LORD, the only God of heaven and earth, the only Saviour, the God who is all He has said He is

And in that mercy and confession their pride will be silenced and they will experience shame – 'you will remember your ways and be ashamed'.

Shame is perceived as a negative emotion, but some shame is appropriate and life giving. Just like the adulterous and promiscuous wife, Israel should experience shame for her idolatrous unfaithfulness. It was unjustified, ungrateful, impoverishing and destructive, dishonouring the one who had freely and generously loved them.

But unlike other shame we experience, this shame does not drive them away from God. It is experienced in relationship with God because the LORD atones for sin. He will purify and cleanse them.

So they will live conscious of their undeserving the good the LORD gives them, yet enjoying all the good of being the LORD's people, living in His presence.

This shame breeds thankfulness, not hiding

Trusting confession of the LORD's goodness and faithfulness, not disappointment and complaining, blaming God for what they experienced.

Ezekiel 16 is a big prophecy, and its shocking language is meant to engage those exiles and us emotionally

To feel the wickedness of Israel's unfaithfulness

To feel the LORD's outrage

To feel the justice of His sentence

So that they would see themselves as their holy and just God sees them

So that they would stop thinking that their problem was the LORD's failure, and see that it was their failure

And start listening to Him

To start listening to Him as He said hope and life for them, even in exile, experiencing already His judgment, would be found in trusting Him and turning back to Him

Good for us to start seeing ourselves as God's sees us – sinners deserving death, and that His sentence is just, but that life and hope is found in turning back to God

What has it cost God to get them to rethink?

But as we think about Ezekiel 16 I want to ask you a question.

What has it cost God to get them to rethink who they are and what they can expect of God?

What has it cost God?

Here we have language you and I would blush to use.

The LORD didn't need to speak to them – he could have just left them.

He has already repeatedly told them of their sin.

But here He goes a step further

The almighty, holy, righteous, just God, whose eyes are too pure to look on evil, humbles Himself, stoops low, to use words that will penetrate their hard hearts

More, He speaks of His humiliation, speaks of Himself as a betrayed and misused husband, treated with contempt, putting up with contempt, for years

The passion in these words make you tremble

But they are gracious, as God sets aside His dignity to get hard hearted sinners to see reality, to see their behaviour and its outcome as He sees it

So that they would turn and find life

See behind the passion to a God who passionately loves and wants to save His people and the world, even you, in faithfulness to His promises

And let me ask you another question

What has it cost God to get us to rethink?

What has it cost God to get us to rethink, to point us to hope, to secure the atonement that allows the shameful to live in His presence, the offence of their disgrace wiped away?

What has it cost God to get us to see our misuse of His good gifts, our determination to have nothing to do with Him, our hatred of Him that will run after any other so called god, give our love to created things – for what it is.

It was more than an impassioned speech.

It was the Word becoming flesh, the eternal Son humbling Himself to be born in a stable.

And then the loved Son, the Lord Jesus, who went about doing good submitting Himself to the criticism, the disbelief, the lies, the mocking, the hatred of a humanity who did not want their Creator to have a place amongst them.

In the treatment of Jesus the human heart, our heart, is revealed.

We want the gifts, but not the giver

We want to possess the world – as our own, without acknowledging its maker

We want to believe that we can put all our trust in ourselves, and only acknowledge our own wills as the source of right and wrong, rule the world and our own lives without reference to God.

And it was the good people, the people confident of their own righteousness, who killed Jesus

To get us to see the truth of our own hearts, our own hatred of God

It took the Son of God to humble Himself to engage in the great obscenity of the cross.

It is an obscenity

The creatures killing the Creator

Hatred crushing love

Lies triumphing over truth

Death swallowing life

Darkness extinguishing the light

But the Son of God did not humble Himself just so that as a race we would be confronted with our own hatred of God, our determination to rule our lives in His place.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never overcome that light. He lives

He humbles Himself to fulfill the word of God, the promise of God – that in Abraham's offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed, that even sinners can find life through faith in Him.

He humbled Himself to atone for sin, to cover over the offence of our proud rebellion

He humbled Himself so that we could repent, turn back to God and find mercy, so that you and I can experience the life giving shame of seeing our sin, our pride, for what it is in the light of God's mercy and love

See it as disgraceful, ungrateful, destructive – and still not the final word of God on our lives

Time to rethink.

Seeing your sin as God sees it, and seeing how God has graciously humbled Himself so you can see your rebellion against your Creator for what it is and for what it deserves

How He Humbled Himself to give you hope and life in turning back to Him

Tells you that surely it is time to rethink

Not a believer, the God who confronts you with words you might think are impolite – like judgment and wrath – is the God who speaks so that you can turn away from continuing your ungrateful rebellion against Him that brings you death, from the lies that justify your rejection

And find life in turning back to find forgiveness and life through trusting His Son Jesus.

The problem you have in relating to God is with you, not Him

Find the truth of God by finding out about Jesus

Find the mercy of God by trusting Jesus

Or you might be disappointed believer, somebody who thinks you've done your bit but have been let down by God

Rethink, reconsider your confidence in your own righteousness

See your unbelief in His promises, the pride that would find fault with the almighty God who as a believer you say gave His Son for you as sin

See your grumbling for what it is, remember who you are, a sinner living among sinners, and repent

And if you are a Believer, who knows and feels that life giving shame for your disobedience of God's good commands, for your lack of trust in and thankfulness to the good God who made you and loves you,

Feels it, can own it grievous as that may be, because you know the gracious humility of the Son in atoning for your sin, wiping its offence away forever

Never forget

Never forget that you have life, you have relationship with the living God, by His grace and generosity, by faith in His son, not your own works

And think

IF my God has been willing to use the language of the gutter to speak to those in the gutter

If my God has been willing to humble Himself to get both the truth of my rebellion and His gracious forgiveness across to me, to bring it home to my hard heart,

Then shouldn't I be willing not to stand on my dignity but, like the apostle, to become all things to all people so that by all means I might save some

To live and speak in ways others will hear.

You might not be good at it, like I know I am not good at it, but you and I can resolve to be better