



## **Selah: Stop, Look, Listen- March 28, 2023**

The Lord be with you.

"God has forgotten me." Those were her exact words. "God has forgotten me." So I pulled up a chair and sat by her hospital bed as the patient poured forth her pain and despair. "God has forgotten me," she said in many tears and suffering.

As a pastor and Chaplain, I've heard those words or words like them many times. And truth be told, I've thought and said those words myself. God has forgotten me. That's what our feelings sometimes tell us, but you know our feelings are not right. Our emotional responses to life's pain and trouble may be authentic, but they're not accurate because you and I, we are unforgettable to God. Oh, we might forget God, but God does not forget us. There are many scriptures that we have assurance this of this, but there's one passage that I have in mind today that I really wanna share with you as it has meant so much to me. It's in the prophet Isaiah, chapter 49, verses 14-16. I wanna read to the passage and then unpack it. Isaiah 49 versus 14 through 16. But Zion said. Now here, Zion it speaks of God's people. But Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me. My Lord has forgotten me. That's what the people of God are feeling. That's what they're thinking. Forgotten by God, but then God answers them the next verse, where God says, "Can a woman forget her nursing child or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget. Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hand."

Now, here's a situation. Here here what happened in Isaiah chapter 49. The back story is that the people of God have forgotten God. They're serving other gods, they're not keeping the Lord's teaching, and so they've ended up in exile. They've ended up and what is known as the Babylonian captivity as they are hundreds of miles from home, and they're feeling that God has forgotten them. They just can't bring themselves to believe God's promises to them, that they can't see beyond their present situation, and so they're feeling forgotten by God.

Now, I love how God answers his people's feelings about being forgotten by God. God asked them, "Can a woman forget her nursing child or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget. Yet I will not forget you." It's interesting that the God asked, Can a woman forget her nursing child? I say that because when my wife was nursing our two sons, let me tell you, the last thing, the last thing she would have forgotten was to nurse her children because she would have been a lot of pain, and you know that besides a nursing child isn't going to let mom forget. Now, it is our human experience that there is no bond that is more powerful than the bond between a mother and her child, a mother at her nursing child. So we've come to expect that mothers make extraordinary sacrifices for their children, and here the Lord draws upon the image of the mother's



## water from rock

love to reassure his people of His love, and so God asked, "Can a woman forget her nursing child or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget. Yet I will not forget you."

Can a mother show no compassion for the child of her womb? Now, I wanna point out here that the Hebrew word for compassion is linked to the Hebrew word for womb. There's a beautiful word play here as the Hebrew word translated womb as a woman's womb, It comes from the same root as the Hebrew word for compassion. So that the Hebrew word compassion, it is literally the longing of the womb. It is the maternal longing of a mother for her child, and God is telling us that that's how God longs for you. That God can never forget you. Can a woman forget her nursing child or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. It's a mother's instinct. It is the longing of her womb to love and care for her child. And God's love for you, well, it is infinitely greater than the love of a mother or a father. And then to drive home a point even more, the Lord says in verse 16, he says, See, see, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands.

Okay, we all know what tattooing is. We see it a lot as people that to various things that they like, or they tattoo them on their arms, their back, their chest, various body parts, but notice that God says that He tattoos us on the palms of his hands. That body part that is never hidden from his view, that part always before God, that's the sense of what God is saying here that he has engraved us on the palms of his hands. In the days of the prophet Isaiah it was customary for a slave to tattoo his master's name upon His body, but here God in His loving compassion, in his maternal longing, says that He tattoos us on the palms of his hand so that he can never forget. You might forget me, God says, But I will not forget you. You are literally unforgettable to God. Sin, Sickness, sorrow, suffering, despair, or even Satan cannot cause God to forget you.

So do not trust your feelings. Your feelings of being forgotten by God. Our emotional responses to life situations can be real, but not right. Right about the same time that God was speaking these words to his people through the prophet Isaiah, the time of exile and bondage that the time of feeling forgotten, God spoke these words through his prophet Jeremiah in Lamentations chapter 3. "But this I call to mind. And therefore, I have hope. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness."

So, do not forget. Do not forget that you are unforgettable to God.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.