

## Isaiah 49:14 to 50:3

**14** But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me."

**15** "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.

**16** See, I have inscribed you on the palms *of My hands*; Your walls *are* continually before Me.

**17** Your sons shall make haste; Your destroyers and those who laid you waste Shall go away from you.

**18** Lift up your eyes, look around and see; All these gather together *and* come to you. As I live," says the LORD, "You shall surely clothe yourselves with them all as an ornament, And bind them *on you* as a bride *does*.

**19** "For your waste and desolate places, And the land of your destruction, Will even now be too small for the inhabitants; And those who swallowed you up will be far away.

**20** The children you will have, After you have lost the others, Will say again in your ears, 'The place *is* too small for me; Give me a place where I may dwell.'

**21** Then you will say in your heart, 'Who has begotten these for me, Since I have lost my children and am desolate, A captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? There I was, left alone; But these, where *were* they?' "

**22** Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, And set up My standard for the peoples; They shall bring your sons in *their* arms, And your daughters shall be carried on *their* shoulders;

**23** Kings shall be your foster fathers, And their queens your nursing mothers; They shall bow down to you with *their* faces to the earth, And lick up the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I *am* the LORD, For they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me."

**24** Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, Or the captives of the righteous be delivered?

**25** But thus says the LORD: "Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, And the prey of the terrible be delivered; For I will contend with him who contends with you, And I will save your children.

**26** I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, And they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine. All flesh shall know That I, the LORD, *am* your Savior, And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."  
Isaiah 50:1-3 (NKJV)

**1** Thus says the LORD: "Where *is* the certificate of your mother's divorce, Whom I have put away? Or which of My creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you? For your iniquities you have sold yourselves, And for your transgressions your mother has been put away.

<sup>2</sup> **Why, when I came, was *there* no man? Why, when I called, was *there* none to answer? Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Indeed with My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness; Their fish stink because *there is* no water, And die of thirst.**

<sup>3</sup> **I clothe the heavens with blackness, And I make sackcloth their covering."**

What would **you** do?

What would you do if you had a relationship with a person? You had invested everything into that relationship. You had shown, by the price you were willing to pay, that you were totally committed to this person. You had exhibited acts of love over and over again. You had rescued this person out of bad situation after bad situation. You had done thousands of things that helped this person, and nothing ever to do any harm whatsoever.

And this is how the person responds to you.

First their attention is stolen by anyone or anything that is the least little bit attractive to them. They cannot be relied upon to go through a single day without a distraction to their devotion to you. Their affections are as fickle as the day is long.

Second they simply will not trust your promises. You say you will take care of their lives but they refuse to believe it. They resort to their strategies of **providing for their own security** or **fretting because they don't have any**. They cannot face a single unpleasant event without second guessing whether you will look out for their best interest. They are besides themselves in fear and anguish often, acting as if they really have no one they can trust to look out for them.

Third, they are not willing to pay **any price for you**, as if your relationship with them is not worth anything. If you ask them to **be patient** while facing something painful, they begin **questioning your love**. They doubt that you really care. They act like they are just using you. You cannot tell them to do anything. If you ask them to **risk anything that is important to them** they will balk and resist and get angry and **do what they want**.

Now this person says wonderful things about you. They go to meetings about you all the time. They look like your biggest fans, until it is hard for them. And then they react in ways that completely dishonor you and it says to onlookers that they believe you are untrustworthy and unreliable and impotent to provide the help they really need.

And then, on top of all this, they never seem to have time for you. They have time for every mundane thing on the face of the globe. They have time for entertainers or recreation, or other means of escape, but they will not spend meaningful time with you.

Now, how would you respond? How would you react? Would you not, one day, just say, **"I have had enough."** I am not putting up with you for one more day. I am leaving. I deserve better than this.

I hope by now you are getting the idea. What I am talking about is **us and God**. What I am talking about are the tendencies of every human being that our God has ever had a relationship with. God has never once gotten a good deal when reaching out to a human. Now if **we** were to pick someone like this to have a relationship with, it would only be because we were ignorant what kind of person we were picking. We would never initiate such a one sided relationship knowingly. But God has known **beforehand** the treatment He would receive from every human he has ever called to Himself. Every single one. And God has chosen us still.

I am only saying this to make one point. This is what our God is like. **Really**. This is more than a doctrine. It is more than a nice thing to say about God. No. The fact that God has a relationship **with a single human being** is proof positive of what kind of God He really is. This is something in God that we can completely trust. We can throw ourselves upon His love knowing rock solid that we are safe in doing so. That is the truth. Those are the facts.

That brings me to a question. Have we ever, in all of our lives, responded to God **as if He really loved us?** Have we ever deeply considered that His love for us is **very little** like our love for Him. He does not **need us**. He knows He will never get **the better end of the deal**. There is nothing in us that He would gain anything of importance by exploiting us. There appears to only be one thing that God really gets out of the whole experience. By loving us He has the opportunity to show off His love and grace. By loving us He is able to make much of Himself. Think about that. We have all kinds of needs. We choose some of the people in our lives because we think **they** can meet our needs. We call it love. But we know it is a mixed motive. We do not usually choose a person to love like Hosea did, knowing right off the bat we were going to be **the giving party** and the other party would be **the taking party**. We usually have an eye for "what is in it for me". But God knows everything. His is **always** a Hosea relationship. There are no heroes who loved God perfectly. Some of God's favorites displayed some of the greatest sins. The implications of all this are amazing. If you are in Christ, **you have never been more loved than you are right now. You have never been more**

**loved than God loves you. You have never been in less danger of losing love than you are right now.** He will never leave you nor forsake you. God cannot lie. And that is what He said. We need to learn how to bask in that. We need to let that fact drive us to such a deep trust that we will say, Jesus—here I am. All of me. Nothing held back. I know you love me. Now help me as I try to show you **the love I have for you.** Help me do this right. Help me never hold any circumstantial evidence against you when things get tough and I don't like the load I am asked to carry. Help me to be true to your love. Help me to react to life in such a way that those around me know that I believe I am loved by God. I will never be worthy of a love like yours. But help me to at least begin to respond in a manner worthy of You.

I say all of this in application of the first verse of our text.

**14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me."**

What was happening here? Judah had been overrun by Babylon and they were captives. The people looked at the situation and this is how they calculated it. "The problem we are having is because our God does not love us."

Has this ever happened to you? A person does something offensive. You react to the offense in an appropriate manner. The person who did the offensive thing does not realize, admit, or even have a clue about the offense **they** initially committed. They refuse to see or admit they did **anything** that was worthy of **a negative response.** They now react to your negativity as if it has come out of the clear blue. At this point there is nothing to be gained by conversation. Until the person can at least recognize their offense, and the reaction was caused as a result of an offense that deserved a negative reaction, any future discussion will quickly be irrelevant and completely off track. Maybe we think we are the only ones who have encountered such a thing. But we are not. This happens to God all the time. And we are often the ones who are responding to God in such a fashion.

We say, God, I don't like this mess I am in. God I have no one I can confide in. God my church treats me badly. God I am not as useful or trusted in the lives of others as I would like to be. God this bad thing has happened to me. You must not love me.

And yet anyone watching from a distance could see that often it is **our lack** of obedience, **our lack** of trust in God, **our lack** of willingness to submit to Him and to obey Him that has caused much of our trouble. Relational troubles are often this way. Not always, certainly, but often. So many times people are reacting to what we have done, but we take no responsibility for what we

have done. We don't add up that people don't just single out people to treat badly usually. If there is a pattern in our relationships, we are the common factor. We are probably doing something that is creating that pattern. The pattern is probably created by people reacting to us.

When I was in my college years I would find myself rejected by any girl that I really allowed myself to get attached to. I wanted to blame the girls for rejecting me. And I wrote some mean songs to that effect. But at the same time I knew that I was the common denominator. I was doing something that had an effect opposite to the one I wanted. This would have been obvious to anyone who was watching. But it would have been hard for them to explain it to me in a way I would have understood. Over the years I can see what I was doing wrong with crystal clarity. Fortunately it was all part of God's plan of getting me to Carla. But it was a very good illustration of creating a situation **by my own behavior** and then **blaming someone else** for their predictable response. These things are very often hard to see and admit about ourselves. It is far easier to blame someone else for their reaction than to search our soul for our own problem.

What were the Israelites guilty of? They were guilty of idolatry. They were guilty of spiritual adultery. They were sinning against God in horrible ways. God punishes them. They were warned it would happen. There were prophets predicting it. They had every indication that they were asking for it. But after it happened what did they say? God has forgotten us. God doesn't love us. If God loved us He wouldn't treat us this badly. Isn't that just an infuriating response? Yet we have all been guilty of it.

A good question to ask is, **what pattern of reactions do I see in the Christian people around me? What am I doing that might create that reaction?** Remember. If there is a pattern, it is probably our action that are creating that pattern.

Another good question is, are any of the rough situations I am in right now a result of my responses to God? Is this a discipline for sin? Or is this a natural result of sinful decisions. Many times our bad situations are not a result of sin and rebellion. But sometimes they are. That is always worth considering when something painful happens to us.

Now God responds to their unfair evaluation of Him. "You think I do not love you. You think I am the problem. Let me tell you about that."

<sup>15</sup> **"Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.**

God points out that even humans generally treat their children with a special attention and compassion. We would expect that much. But even if a woman

might fail to do such a thing, I will never fail. My love is perfect. I will remember my people to the end. I will never have them out of my mind. My love for my children is perfect.

**16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.**

Do you see this amazing fact? Every name of every believer is written on the hands of God. This is a figurative expression that is designed to show us just how very mindful of us He is. Have you ever written something on your hand? Why did you do it? Most times it is so you will remember it. Your sight of your hand will remind you of what you need to do. In our case it is **our identity** that is written on **His hand**. It is who we are. This is the amazing love we were talking about earlier. God is recognizing, not the **nation** we live in. He is recognizing not the **state** in which we reside. He is not noting the **town** we live in. He is not even noting the **church** we attend. He is noting us as **individuals** in the place that will get **His greatest attentions**. We may not look at all our body parts. And as we get bigger many of them get harder to see. But we all often look at our hands. Because our hands are an integral part of what we are doing. We do most work with our hands. God is looking at our names, who we are, all the time as He carries out His work.

**17 Your sons shall make haste; Your destroyers and those who laid you waste Shall go away from you.**

**18 Lift up your eyes, look around and see; All these gather together and come to you. As I live," says the LORD, "You shall surely clothe yourselves with them all as an ornament, And bind them on you as a bride does.**

**19 "For your waste and desolate places, And the land of your destruction, Will even now be too small for the inhabitants; And those who swallowed you up will be far away.**

**20 The children you will have, After you have lost the others, Will say again in your ears, 'The place is too small for me; Give me a place where I may dwell.'**

then skip to 23

**23 Kings shall be your foster fathers, And their queens your nursing mothers; They shall bow down to you with *their* faces to the earth, And lick up the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I *am* the LORD, For they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me."**

Look at the picture here. Now remember God is defending Himself. God is making the case for how loving He is of His people. This is how He remembers them.

The picture Isaiah paints here is amazing. It is the picture of a mother whose children have abandoned her. Maybe they were dragged off. Maybe they left by choice. The woman is Jerusalem but everything said is also true of the New Testament church as well. This woman is left desolate. She has no one. She is in a bad way. But this God, who the Babylonian captives want to blame for His **lack of love** shows what He is really made of.

Over time the new kids begin showing up. They are coming from everywhere. They show signs that God has been doing things all over the world in preparation for this event. God has used worldlings everywhere in the effort of **filling up this woman's family** in such a way that she cannot even contemplate it. It blows her mind. She was in such a bad way. She could never have imagined being so blessed. And yet she is.

Look at the question here.

**21 Then you will say in your heart, 'Who has begotten these for me, Since I have lost my children and am desolate, who has brought these up? There I was, left alone; But these, where were they?' "**

**22 Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, And set up My standard for the peoples; They shall bring your sons in *their* arms, And your daughters shall be carried on *their* shoulders;**

The question is who. Who blessed me like this? Who arranged this. Where did all these kids come from? Where did all these blessings come from? Who in the world blessed me in such a way?

The answer? The Lord GOD did it. This God that the captives are whining about. This God that is being blamed for the consequences of the captive's sins. This is the God who blesses. This is the God who remembers. This is the God who loves. He is nothing like His sinful rebellious forgetful people. He always delivers on His promises.

This is the love of God we started this sermon with. You can see now why it was so appropriate. This loving God surprises us with His blessings. Think about how many years Jerusalem lay dormant, housing only beasts. What would you have thought? Had we **not known** what God promised we may have thought, well that project is over. That project has failed. But no project will ever fail that God has promised will succeed. No people will ever be lost that He says will be saved.

Now what about the Church? How does this relate to the church? Well are we not sometimes discouraged? Don't we sometimes think, God, no one wants what you are offering. They are so hard. The just blow me off. God where are those children you promised? I like what Mr Ortland says here.

**The growth of the church will be too vast to be explainable by any human plan, too massive to be accommodated by any human program. It won't be our faith that grows the church but only God's deep resolve to show mercy to more and more sinners. In the final triumph of grace, we won't congratulate ourselves on a job well done; we'll stutter in amazement, "Behold, I was left alone; from where have these come?" ([v. 21b](#)).**

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

That is the nature of God's work. It is not predictable. It is not programmable. We could use marketing techniques to fill our building with spectators. But we can only trust God and obey what He says to see if He will fill our building with followers of His. Sometimes it will look like a failed project. But in the end we will be asking, where did all of these come from. Oh that we would experience some of that kind of influx. Oh that God would bless us in such a way. One thing we know for sure. **It is like Him.**

We cannot go on and miss this gem hidden in the middle of those verses.

**Then you will know that I *am* the LORD, For they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me."**

I think the million dollar word here is wait. Waiting implies trusting God even when we see no evidence that our wait will be worthwhile. This is counting on a full house when the house is empty. This is counting on God's blessings when all we can see is pain. This is being willing to bank everything we are on something that we cannot see but we know that God has said. That is the kind of faith God is pleased with in us. And He promises a result if we will do such a thing, if we will take Him at His word, if we will trust His time table. No shame. Our trust will always be vindicated. It will shown to have been the wisest course of action. It will be shown to be the smartest thing we could ever have done.

Where are you walking today where you only have God's word to bank on. You are believing something that does not look possible. You are deciding to risk what looks to be a sure loss but you know it is not because God promised. Where are we allowing our faith to cost us our lives while we are banking upon the goodness of God? Where do we even need faith in our lives? Make no mistake. That is what God wants our responses to life's situations and tests to be. Anything less is a dishonor to Him. And if we just trust Him, if we only believe Him, we will never taste shame.

**24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, Or the captives of the righteous be delivered?**



**25 But thus says the LORD: "Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, And the prey of the terrible be delivered; For I will contend with him who contends with you, And I will save your children.**

**26 I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, And they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine. All flesh shall know That I, the LORD, *am* your Savior, And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."**

This is the kind of God you want to have on your side. This is essentially saying that no one can stand against Him. Greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world. He is saying that even His children who look to be in impossible situations will be delivered. And God takes it personally when His children are victimized. Now we have to remember the word we looked at earlier. Wait. Sometimes we have to wait a long time to see the people of God avenged. God will contend with those who contend with His people. But this doesn't always happen in our time table. If nothing else, Revelation shows us that this will **truly happen**. And the souls under the alter have to ask the question- how long? Evidently it has taken a while up until then. But the answer is not- never. The answer is that **it will happen**. The people of God may be tread upon. They may be killed. But if we are faithful we will never be ashamed. One day everyone will be able to see that those pesky Christians who have been accused of every social evil in the book have no embarrassment. They trust in their God and their God has pulled through.

### **Isaiah 50:1-3 (NKJV)**

**1 Thus says the LORD: "Where *is* the certificate of your mother's divorce, Whom I have put away? Or which of My creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you?"**

Now the Lord gets back to the initial accusation. The captives had accused God that He did not remember them, He did not love them. God first went into great detail about what His love is like. But now He is about to show them that they cannot get away with this mental slight of hand like we talked about earlier. They can **pretend** that they were victims of God. But that will not stand up to scrutiny.

He asks the question, so if I caused the problem there would be evidence. If I ended this marriage, there would be evidence. Where is this evidence that it was on me? Bring out the divorce certificate. What are the charges? They aren't based on any failure of my part. Your mother was unfaithful. Your mother was idolatrous and adulterous.

Or who did I owe money to and was in a bind so I sold you to them? Where is that party? Where is the evidence?

Don't we always want to trust our suspicious feelings or our own evil projections? Don't we often think something is true with no other evidence than that we think something is true. Remember how our flesh defaults to **I am and there is none besides me**? Well we do it all the time. But God won't have that and we should not have it either. We should demand evidence to even our own accusations. Where is the proof? That is what God asks. Do you know how rare a person it is who looks to the proof of his life to know the truth of his life? People rarely will do that. We like our theories. They serve us well. But truth arrived at by proof, that is a little harder to stomach.

So God asks, where is your proof that I do not love you?

The answer? There is none. This is not God's fault. Whose is it? Look what God says.

**For your iniquities you have sold yourselves, And for your transgressions your mother has been put away.**

Here all the blame is placed where it should be placed. Isn't this so often the case? It is our sin that put us in the most horrible spots. It was no lack of God's love. Maybe the consequences of sin did us in. Maybe our discipline by God made us sting. But we need to quit acting like we didn't know what happened. We didn't know why God responded so nastily. We need to take responsibility. That is what Isaiah is calling these people to do. He was saying the problem was **not God**. The problem was **your own sin** that He warned you about over and over and over again.

**<sup>2</sup> Why, when I came, was there no man? Why, when I called, was there none to answer? Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Indeed with My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness; Their fish stink because there is no water, And die of thirst.**

**<sup>3</sup> I clothe the heavens with blackness, And I make sackcloth their covering."**

Now God mocks those who blame Him for not being loving enough. God has always had the power to rescue, to redeem, to deliver. God can do whatever He pleases whenever He pleases. But He was not yet ready to redeem these people who were blaming God for the consequences of their own sin. And they might want to consider twice who they are accusing. God can not only withhold his rescue. If He wants to He can truly make their lives far more miserable than they were experiencing at the moment.

So how can we change as a result of what we have heard this morning. Well first I think we need to grapple with- do I really, **down deep in my heart where I make my important decisions**, trust that God really loves me? Have I considered that He put my name on His hands? He has made my welfare important to Him. Do we get it to the point that **we act like it?**

Second are we **reacting** to God's response to us when we have actually **determined** God's response to us? And are we doing that with others as well? When we see them react negatively toward us, do we ask, **what might I have done that would have created this reaction?** That is always the best starting point. Sometimes we have done nothing to cause the negative reaction. And sometimes the negative reaction is unfair and we need to say so when appropriate. But sometimes the negative response is as predictable as the sun coming up but we in our "I am and there is no one besides" mindset wonder what side of the bed this person got up on this morning, completely oblivious to our own offensiveness.

At the end of the day, truth is what we need. It is terribly hard to love truth. Truth often makes us look bad. Truth makes us feel bad. But if we **are** bad, we might expect that response. Do we love truth enough to see if even if it hurts us? Truth in the inmost place is what sanctification is all about. And it can be a very painful process. But it is also true that **the truth will set us free**. When we tell **the truth about ourselves**, we are no longer held hostage by **our lies about ourselves**. And that freedom is a wonderful thing.