

Isaiah 49:14-50:3 'So What's the Problem?' TCL

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Main thing: The problem is not that God forgets us, but that we forget him and his power.

Sing: *Glorious things; Hark my soul ... can a woman's tender care?*

"Some churches' biggest problem is not having a building"; others' is having a terrible building!

All churches have the problem of sin, and there are enemies all around.

All our problems will be solved by the Servant of the LORD, Jesus:

- 49:13 *Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.*

But even after the Servant's world-class salvation has been promised in 49:13, we read next:

- 49:14 *But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me."*

'Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God' is speaking about God's people.

Q. So what appears to be the problem with Zion? **A.** She thinks *the LORD* God has forgotten her :(

And we can do that sometimes too!

I. IS IT THAT GOD FORGETS US? 14-18

- 15 *"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you."*

Short answer: 'No'. *The LORD* will never forget his blood-bought people. Never.

- 16 *Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.*

Although speaks about city walls, it means God will never forsake his people, you and me.

- 18ab *Lift up your eyes all round and see; they all gather, they come to you.*

By 'they', Isaiah means actual, biological, people, whom the *LORD* will never forget or forsake.

- 18c *As I live, declares the LORD, ...*

The LORD goes on oath, to make sure that we really believe he will never forget or forsake us.

Jesus was forsaken so that you will never be! You must believe that.

II. IS IT THAT ZION [Jerusalem] IS TOO CRAMPED? 19-23

- 19 *"Surely your waste and your desolate places and your devastated land—surely now you will be too narrow for your inhabitants, and those who swallowed you up will be far away.*

Jerusalem will be too small for all the exiles who return, literally, too cramped., *too small* NIV.

- 20 *The children of your bereavement will yet say in your ears: 'The place is too narrow for me; make room for me to dwell in.'*

In fact, all the dead and exiled children will come back and there will be too little room in Zion!

Zion then speaks as a bereaved woman whose children have been killed or taken into exile:

21 *Then you will say in your heart: 'Who has borne me these?*

I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these?

Behold, I was left alone; from where have these come?'"

Zion cannot understand how she is suddenly bulging at the seams when everyone was either killed or exiled to Babylon. **Q.** How can it be?

- 22ab *Thus says the LORD God: "Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples;*

A. Isaiah is now looking ahead 700 years to after Pentecost when the Gentiles will be gathered into Zion, figuratively.

And all those missing or dead or exiled children will be replaced by Gentile children:

- 22cd *and they shall bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.*

→ Adults and children alike will be gathered into God's NC kingdom (and not just commoners):

- 23 *Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet.*

Licking the dust is not meant to sound grim, it was a symbolic gesture of obedience to the king.

The Gentiles will come in and join what was originally a Jewish kingdom, not a take-over.

- 23 fg *Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame."*

Q. Was Zion just too cramped for all these Gentiles?

A. No, the kingdom will be a spiritual worldwide kingdom, so space is not an issue.

GW having to preach outside in 1740 to 10s of 1000s of mainly Gentiles, hanging on every word!
There is plenty of space left in God's kingdom for your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours.

III. IS IT THE ENEMY/CAPTOR? 24-26

- 24 *Can the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant[b] be rescued?*

No, even *captives* of the devil himself will be rescued v25:

- 25 *For thus says the LORD: "Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children.*

Although the language and ideas are 700BC, the prophecy is about us, now, the new covenant.

[And vv22-23 with their *nursing mothers* and *children* being *carried* must include actual children.]

Don't want to say anything controversial or upset anyone, or talk about baptism.

Dual practice at TCL. Apologise in advance for saying anything hurtful or painful, raw nerves etc.

But, parents, regardless of what you believe about children, all we parents are basically in the same boat: We want nothing more than for our kids to be saved as per end of v25.

The very least we can say about v25, is that *the LORD* intends/wants to *save your children*.

That is why Peter says at Pentecost:

- Acts 2:39 *For the promise [of regeneration by the HS, i.e. of being saved] is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."*

That is why Paul exhorts parents:

- Ephesians 6:4 *Fathers [οἱ πατέρες=parents], do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

Q. Why? **A.** So that they will be saved, and live their lives for *the Lord*.

As parents we must never forget why and for whom we are bringing up our children.

IV. (Q.) SO WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? 50:1-3

50:2ab *Why, when I came, was there no man; why, when I called, was there no one to answer?*

A1. They had forgotten the LORD; they didn't even pick up the 'phone!

A2. Specifically, they had forgotten God's power:

- 50:2c-h *Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea [the Exodus], I make the rivers a desert; their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst. [like the 10 plagues on Egypt?]*

They had forgotten God and forgotten his power. **Q.** Would you ever forget God and his power?

A. We might not forget God, but we easily forget about his awesome power!

CONCLUSION

The problem is not that God forgets us, but that we forget him; and we forget his power to save.

This doesn't happen over night; it is a creeping effect that takes decades in a church.

A particular church has about 40 members, mainly in their 70s and 80s but with some younger people around. After a while, when you get to know them, u realise that there are 2 whole generations missing: the children (now grown up) and the grandchildren. Have they just left the attractive market town and disappeared to uni and never come back? Maybe some.

But the main explanation is a spiritual one. Their children had not been saved. Some got on fairly well with their parents; some did not. But they were almost all missing. Very few had moved away and now belonged to other churches somewhere.

They missing were rarely mentioned at church, and if you went to their mid-week meetings they were almost never prayed for. That's terrible, but understandable. **Q.** Why not? **A.** I think ...

Over the decades the parents slowly became grandparents and became discouraged. They no longer really believed in practice that God could or would save their kids. So, they stopped praying at the prayer meeting. Other felt ashamed or humiliated and rather resented the few whose kids had been saved. All in all, it was so much less painful just to pray about people's ailments, employment prospects, upcoming meetings, the evangelistic book table – which were all good things to pray about. But nobody prayed for the missing, unsaved, generations.

Q. Was it that God had forgotten them and their children and grandchildren?

A. No; they had forgotten God's power to save. Even though God had been powerful enough to save them, save Israel from Egypt and exiles from Babylon, they had forgotten his power to save their families. We must never get into that situation.

Never let that happen at TCL; do not be discouraged; do not feel ashamed; pray passionately for each other's unsaved family members every week.