

**Dear Fellow Redeemed,**

Isaiah describes **The Power of God's Love** so wonderfully.

**Isaiah 49:8-16**

*8 Thus says the Lord: "In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, 9 saying to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.' They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; 10 they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. 11 And I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up. 12 Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene." 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. 14 But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me." 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. 16 Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.*

This is such a powerful text! Especially the Last three verses. I hope you all memorize these verses if you haven't already and keep them in your heart. Remember them every day. Look at them again: verses 14-16, "But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me." "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. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me." Here is the first, wonderful evidence of **The Power of God's Love**.

**I- It is a Love that CANNOT Forget or Forsake You.**

How often have you felt like the people of Zion? "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me." There are many ways we might express that sentiment. There may be times of severe distress when you actually think and say to yourself, "God has forsaken me. He has forgotten about me." Or we say, "Why me Lord? Why are you doing this to me?" "Where are you when I need you?" "Why aren't you helping me?" Or simply, "Why is this happening?" Even the Psalmist said, "How long will you forget me, O Lord? How long will You hide Your face from me?"

What an insult against God! We bring troubles into our own lives and then we blame God for those troubles? Isaiah had been telling Israel that all their troubles were not because God had forsaken or forgotten them, but because they had forsaken God. They were worshipping idols and disregarding God's commands, and they thought God had forsaken them?

Their troubles were actually evidence that God had NOT forgotten or forsaken them! You've heard of tough love and the need for parents to discipline their children. God has a love that is willing to do the hard task of disciplining His children. He used those troubles to call Israel to repentance and to return to the Lord.

Even though Israel insulted God terribly to suggest that He had forgotten them or forsaken them, God showed His love to Israel by giving them the most beautiful promise of His

unfailing love. He points to the greatest example of love and faithfulness in this world; that of a mother's love for her nursing child and shows that His love and faithfulness is even greater.

The bond between a mother and her nursing child is so strong, it's unthinkable that she could ever forget or worse yet forsake her child. Even though she may be exhausted from sleepless nights, and exasperated by constant crying, her every thought is focused on what does my child need now? Yet, as unthinkable as it is, it can and sadly, it does happen that some women forget or even forsake their nursing child. But God says, "I will NOT forget you." EVER!

Then God tells us why He cannot forget us. He says, "Behold!" See, look here, "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." That is even more permanent than a tattoo. God has literally carved you into the palms of His hands so that He cannot ever forget you. Ranchers brand their cattle. They literally burn their own distinctive mark of ownership into the hide of their cattle so that everyone knows who that steer belongs to. In Bible times it was not uncommon for slave owners to literally carve some permanent mark into the flesh of their slaves as a permanent sign that this slave belonged to them.

Jesus did the opposite. He engraved your name on Himself, on His own hand as a permanent reminder of His love for you. Remember when Jesus rose from the dead, He told His disciples, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself." Luke 24:39. He invited Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side." John 20:27 Even though He was fully healed and had a glorified body, He still had the marks of the nails in His hands and feet as a permanent sign of His unfailing love. Isaiah also reminds us that

## **II- God's Love is a Power that CAN Change your Life.**

Look again at the beginning of our text, verses 8&9: "Thus says the Lord: "In a time of favour I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, saying to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.'" God the Father is talking to Jesus here. God was giving His Son, Jesus, as a covenant to the people. God had established a covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai. He promised, if they would keep His commands, He would be their God and they would be His people. But they had broken that covenant, time without number. As a result they had no end of troubles. Because they turned to other god's, God did not protect them from their enemies and they were ravaged. He did not provide good weather, so their crops failed. He did not protect them from disease so they suffered. They were in a prison of their own making, the prison of sin and death.

That is the same position we were in. But God gave Jesus "as a covenant to the people." In other words, Jesus fulfilled our side of the covenant and re-established our Covenant with God. In doing so He completely changed our life. We went from being children of Satan, locked in the prison of sin and death, to being children of God, set free to live forever. That covenant was sealed with Christ's own blood. Today, once again Christ will give us His body and blood shed on the cross. You will hear Him say, "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you for the remission of sins." Matt. 26:28

Now look at verses 11&12, "And I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up. 12 Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene." God paves the way for His word of salvation in Christ to go out to all the world. He had said just two verses before our text,

verse 6 “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.” Jesus died for all the people of the earth, not just for the nation of Israel. Not just for those who would believe. He died for all. The power of God’s love is enough to save all people and to change their lives dramatically.

June is “Pride Month!” You can’t miss it. There are signs in almost every store and business. Commercials on TV celebrating the diversity of lives. Even the church we rented Friday for a concert had a large poster board about how they were a affirming church of all lifestyles. They are all still trapped in that prison of sin. They are living in open rebellion against God’s commands and rejecting His true love while claiming that He loves them and affirms their sin. We might think it is pointless to try to say anything because they are so vehement against any suggestion that their lifestyle is a sin against God. But God’s true love makes a road through the highest mountain of opposition and it does have the Power to change even the greatest enemy of the Gospel into a friend of God. As Paul said, “The Gospel is the Power of God to salvation.” His Love has the power to change hearts and lives to truly love and serve Him. After all He saved US and changed our lives. He can do it for others also. So let us boldly proclaim His true love that came to seek and to save the lost. Isaiah also describes how

### **III- God’s Love DOES Provide and Preserve You.**

Paul assures us in Romans 8:31-32 “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” If God loved you enough to make the greatest sacrifice to save you, do you really think He would fail to take care of you in this life? Isaiah says, “They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them.” Vs. 9b-10 Isn’t that beautiful? Our Saviour will feed us and lead us, both physically and spiritually.

Jesus reassured us in His Sermon on the Mount which we read as our Gospel lesson, we don’t need to worry. He feeds the birds of the air and clothes the flowers of the field in gorgeous array. Then Jesus says, “Are you not of more value than they?” Matt. 6:26-32. Then He concludes, “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ Or ‘What shall we drink?’ Or ‘What shall we wear?’” We probably don’t worry about whether we will have enough to eat or have any clothes to wear. We have plenty of those things. But that doesn’t mean we don’t have financial concerns and struggles with large loans for university, or mortgages or if you have enough money to retire.

But as Jesus pointed out, when we worry and fret about these things, and focus our attention on that, then we are taking our attention away from God. When we worry about these things we are acting as if it is all up to us to take care of these things. Then we begin to make poor choices thinking these other responsibilities are more urgent than worshiping God or serving Him or doing His will. When that happens Jesus says we are “Hating God.” Jesus frees us from that worry and fretting by assuring us, “Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.” That doesn’t mean we can just forget about those responsibilities, but seek God and His righteousness and all these things will be added. God will get you through it?

Jesus also promises He will protect us. He says in our text: “Neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them.” What a beautiful picture. Once again, we don’t want to get the wrong

impression. This doesn't mean that we will never have any troubles in life. If you think that then you will blame God or complain against Him when troubles and pains do come. This was just on Julie's Facebook feed the other day, "*Remember Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego? God did not put out the fire, He put Jesus in there with them. Our faith is not about God putting out the fires in our lives, its about Who is in there with us.*"

His Love makes all the difference in our times of trouble and heartache. We just need to remember His love and faithfulness is with us always. Finally we consider how

#### **IV- God's Love DOES have the Power to Move You to Praise.**

Look at Vs. 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." I just spent a few days in the mountains and it was as if they were singing joyful praise to God. And it can't help but make your heart soar with joyful praise to God who has created such beauty and majesty for us to enjoy and to care for. If we learn to see all the little evidences of God's love every day, then our heart be lifted up to praise Him daily. Even in times of affliction the Lord shows His compassion and lifts us up. Remember His love! Hold on to His promises! His love truly does have the power to overcome your affliction and make your heart sing.

Remember, praise is not only from your tongue. The greatest praise to our God is a life lived to His Glory. We are always tempted to try to motivate a better Christian life with the law. Parents and pastors often try to get their children or their members to do better by harping on the law, what you should and shouldn't do. That's legalism, trying to motivate a godly life with the law. We need the law to convict us and lead us to repentance and to teach us what a God pleasing life looks like. But the law has absolutely no power to move us to live a godly life.

You know how, if a manager or even a parent always and only finds fault with what you do and says you need to do this and that. If he never encourages, you finally give up and don't even care about trying to do better. But if they are kind and encouraging, acknowledging what you do and giving helpful hints about how you can improve, then you want to improve.

Think about how God deals with you. We are constantly falling short of His standards, yet He doesn't beat us down about how rotten we are. He says, "I love you. I forgive you." He is genuinely pleased with the works that we do for Him even though they are far from perfect. And He shows us where and how we can improve our life. Only God's love has the power to move us to live for Him. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."

So live in God's love daily for it is a powerful thing. He will NEVER forget you or forsake you. That Love has already changed your life and it will move you to joyful, godly living all to His glory.

Amen.