

# Forget me not

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Date: 16 February 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you would turn, we are in Hosea chapter 8 this evening.

I would like to read the first two verses, sorry, the first seven verses and then we'll go to verse 14. It's not that we won't cover all of them, but it's simply to capture your attention on the verses of focus. Let's now hear God's word. Hosea chapter 8 verse 1.

Set the trumpet to your lips. One like a vulture is over the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law.

To me they cry, my God, we, Israel, know you. Israel has spurned the good. The enemy shall pursue him. They made kings, but not through me.

[ 1 : 14 ] They set up princes, but I knew it not. With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction. I have spurned your calf, O Samaria. My anger burns against them.

How long will they be incapable of innocence? For it is from Israel a craftsman made it. It is not God.

The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces. For they sow the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind. The standing of corn has no heads. It shall yield no flower.

If it were to yield, strangers would devour it. As we look at verse 14, we see the reason for why all of this is about to happen.

For Israel has forgotten his maker and built places. And Judah has multiplied fortified cities. So I will send a fire upon his cities.

[ 2 : 18 ] And it shall devour her strongholds. Well, may God bless the reading of his word. And we'll come back to his word together after this next hymn.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

God has written in the New Testament through Paul in 1 Corinthians 10, that we are to learn from Israel. We are to read the Old Testament and learn from the people of God of old.

This is how Paul puts it. He says, Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

So, we have Israel's history here in the book of Hosea, as an example for Christians today, on whom the end of the ages have come.

[ 3 : 47 ] And not only is it an example, but it is an instruction for the people of God today, on whom the end of the ages have come.

We are to learn something from this. Well, Paul wants the church in his day to learn from Israel's past, so that they don't make the same kind of mistakes, and that they pursue the right kind of things, rather than the wrong kind of things.

And therefore, Paul understands it's a necessary reminder. Paul never grows tired of reminding his people. The way Paul would put it, perhaps in a slightly different way if I could illustrate, is that, you know, back in the day I used to work with timber, and I know that you don't get something smooth, only by sanding it once.

And the repetition of sanding can seem quite boring, because you're going over the same piece, again, and again, and again, and again. And by and large, you're using the same grain of sandpaper, and then you might change your grain, to a different kind, in order to achieve a different result.

But the process is still the same. And then you end up with a beautiful piece of furniture, because of all that repetition you put in. So, repetition in the life of a believer, according to God, according to the New Testament, is absolutely necessary for you to be beautiful.

[ 5 : 20 ] It's absolutely necessary for you to be polished, ready for God. And yet, too often, we can get frustrated, do I have to tell you again?

How many times do I have to tell you? And yet, God has given this as a very necessary means of changing people. Mums can say to their children, how many times do I have to tell you?

Dads can say to their children, how many times do I have to tell you? Husbands can say to their wives, have I not told you enough times already? And yet, we shouldn't look at that as, that's a negative thing, that's a positive thing, to say the same thing again, if it edifies and builds up and makes a person beautiful before God.

Well, God does this with us. He's given us Israel's history, he's given it to us as an instruction, and he tells us to read it over and over and over again, in the same way that we can be sanded over and over again, that we can be made right, the blemishes can be removed, we can be smooth, and the shape that God wants us to be.

Now, once that is done, along with it comes understanding, that we're not just instructed and given an example, but from it, we gain understanding.

[ 6 : 39 ] And understanding is one of the most important things in the book of Hosea, because God points out that his people come to great harm when they don't understand.

That God's people here, like elsewhere, get themselves into trouble when they don't know God that well, or are not growing in the knowledge of God. Things become increasingly difficult, decisions become harder to make.

But it's not just about understanding, it's also about the danger of forgetting what you've understood, or what you have learnt. What actually happens to a person when they forget?

What actually happens to a person when they forget God? When the command that God gives his people is to remember. We tend to think that forgetfulness is sort of, by the by, it's not a big deal. But throughout the Old Testament, forgetfulness is an active sin towards God, because the command was, remember. Remember the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

[ 7 : 47 ] Now, of course, when you forget God, that then leads into other sins as well. So what does it mean to actually forget God? It's not just absent-mindedness.

It cannot be just absent-mindedness. Or it's God's command to remember wouldn't be quite so as forceful as what it is. When a person forgets, other things begin to happen to them.

Certain things creep into their life that shouldn't be there. So God wants his people to have understanding. He wants his people to receive instruction. He wants that to happen over and over again.

Because God's people always, and have done, if you read back in chapter 4, come to great harm through their lack of knowledge.

God's people are destroyed, he says, because of their lack of knowledge. Well, that's very strong language. That's the type of thing where you want to now sit up and pay attention and use all your might and all your strength to remember what God is teaching you.

[ 8 : 57 ] Because God has your best interest at heart when he's telling you to remember. It actually does you spiritual good. It keeps you safe.

And so forgetfulness is not a simple act of absent-mindedness. It's though no harm will come if I just forget. No, no, no. Great harm will come.

Because you're not just forgetting, you are not remembering. And this is where God places the emphasis on remembering. Here, of course, at the end of chapter 8, God's people have forgotten their maker.

They have not understood the things of God. They do not understand the dangers that come with it. And they need to understand what does it actually mean to forget God. Or perhaps, because this is an instruction to the church, what does it actually mean for you to forget God?

What have you done in order to forget God? You've not just not remembered. There are other things that have happened that have caused you to forget God. So here's the summary of chapter 8 as we make our way through.

[ 10 : 08 ] The end of chapter 8 begins, ends with the problem being stated. The main issue here is that God's people have forgotten their maker.

And not only have they forgotten their maker, but they have built places as well, palaces as well. And Judah has multiplied fortified cities.

So they've forgotten their maker and they've done that as well. And then everything leading up to verse 14 is how God explains to his people in many ways how you have actually come to forget your maker and what went on.

And it begins in verse 1 with a warning. And it quickly moves on to the people of God claiming that they actually have relationship with God, that they actually know God.

If you read it, it says, to me they cry, my God, we, Israel, know you. And the claim is very strong from his people that they know their God.

[ 11 : 11 ] But are they speaking in cross purposes here? Are they speaking of their knowledge of God? Or are they claiming a close walk with God? Are they claiming a relationship?

Well, it becomes very clear in verse 4 that God does not consider it in the same way. God does not consider them as having any kind of relationship with him because they've actually made relationship with kings and with princes.

They have committed themselves to someone else. They've made kings but not through me.

They've made princes and I know them not. In other words, they've gone ahead of God, committed to other people, and yet they're claiming at the same time, no, no, we're still gods.

We are still God's people. God, on the other hand, sees it really quite differently. So the people of God are claiming relationship with God, but God addresses their claim with verse 4, that they've actually moved on in their relationship and they have committed to someone else or to others.

And so verse 14, in committing themselves to someone else, they have forgotten their maker. But then they have become makers themselves, verses 4 to 6.

[ 12 : 28 ] They're not just made people, people created by God, but they are people who have become makers themselves. They are making idols and not only are they making those idols, they're the silver and gold, verse 4, they're then bowing down to the things that they have made rather than bowing down to the maker who has made them.

So there's a massive reversal going on here between God and his people and the people and the things that they have made. Everything is mixed up, messed up, in quite a strange and peculiar way.

That these people are so far gone, down the road, distant from God, that they're now bowing down to the things that they have made with their own hands. It would be like someone trusting in their home.

It would be like someone trusting in their bank account. It would be someone like trusting in their strength, their mind, their heart, their body. And that's not where our trust ought to be. We don't make those things and yet we tend to think that if I eat the right food, yeah, that's a good idea. Or if I exercise, of course it's a good idea but that's not the place of trust. Or that's not the place where you ought to put trust. And what these people are doing is the equivalent of claiming relationship with God but placing their trust in something that they can do.

[ 13 : 46 ] I will make this and this will in turn benefit me. It's sort of an Old Testament version of your self-help bookshop. Here, do this and you will live a good and pleasing life.

And so these people instead of bowing down to their maker are bowing down to the things that they are making. It's a very distant way from God.

They're not close to God in any way, shape, or form. And in doing this, verse 7, they have the famous verse, sown to the wind and they will reap the whirlwind.

Up to this point, we have seen God's patience and love waiting for his people to return. He has put in measures to stop his people from going any further.

He then put in other measures to bring them home. But now, he comes in judgment. Now, he's not patiently waiting. Now, he's actively coming.

[ 14 : 49 ] But his active coming to the people is like a whirlwind. Because they have become like a useless vessel. They multiply altars for sinning, verse 11.

Even if God would write down his law to the tens of thousands, they would not regard, they would regard it as a strange thing. You know, sometimes we might even convince ourselves as Christians, if God only made himself clearer, if God only wrote everything down for me that I could follow, that I could wake up on Monday morning and just follow each step so that I could stay close and clean with God.

If God only did that for me, the Christian life would be so much easier. No, no. Notice what verse 11 says. Sorry, verse 12 says, were I to write for him my laws, by the ten thousands they would be regarded as a strange thing.

Even if I was to go to that kind of measure where I wrote everything down for you and made it as easy as possible so that you would know everything, you still wouldn't do it.

And it goes back to that new heart, not new information. It's true that we need the knowledge of God, but we need the knowledge that tells us that we need a new heart.

[16:05] And so these people are straying. Their attention is divided, but not evenly. They're claiming relationship, but they're really committing to other things.

And as we see here, things that they are actually making themselves, not something that can actually do anything for them. So God could write everything down, but it wouldn't make a blind bit of difference.

And so, verse 14, God's conclusion upon his people is this, you've forgotten me. Everything that I have done, all that I have done, and you have forgotten me.

But how did they actually come to forget God? How does a person actually come to forget God? It's not as if the issue here is absent-mindedness.

Something else is happening which allows God to draw the conclusion that they're forgetting him. It's not just a case of absent-mindedness. They are doing something that actively causes them to receive the judgment from God that they have forgotten their maker.

[17:17] And so, in time, what they reap, they will sow. And they will reap the whirlwind. So, we begin, then, with this idea of losing communion.

God made you for communion. He made you for relationship. He made you to stay close and clean with him. And the writer in Ecclesiastes puts it this way.

Remember your creator in the days of your youth. Whatever you spend your time and attention on, remember God as your creator. Remember he made you out of the dust of the ground.

Remember that everything that you are without God is dust. Thus, the sum total of your being, you are but dust.

But when you have God in you, then you're not dust, are you? But you have life and life forevermore. Communion with God.

[18:19] The fact that you can pray and God will incline his ear to your prayers. And so to lose that, well that's not only a damaging thing for the Christian, but it's a terrible thing to lose.

Paul in Romans considers the Christians there or gets the Roman Christians there to consider their relationship with God as the potter and the clay. You know, be careful what you say to your maker. Be careful how you question your maker. Understand that he made you, you did not make him. Understand that you're in the hands of God, shaped by God, and it's not to be the other way around.

You are not to shape God with your questions or judgments. God is the one who will shape you. And this is a comfort. It's not a pressure.

It's not something that we should shy away from. This is the best possible thing that could happen to you, to be in the hands of God. And yes, at times, the pressure may feel unusual, may feel slightly strong, heavy-handed, but it's always necessary that God handles you in the way that he does.

[19:36] And he handles you in a way where you will never be broken. God handles you with great care but also with great strength, like a steel hand in a velvet glove.

There's both gentleness, but you can feel the power with that gentleness. And that's how God handles you. And so what we learn here is that the people of God are claiming communion with God, and yet at the same time, God isn't claiming the same thing reciprocally.

They say they have a relationship, but when we read the text, one doesn't seem to exist. So why make the claim? Why make the claim that you're in relationship with God when everything around you seems to be saying the exact opposite?

Well, I think the answer is fairly easy to deduce. And that is one of the ways to not admit what you're doing is to claim the opposite.

To claim that you're in relationship with God and doing something, you can always make that claim. No, I'm yours. Verse 2, to me they cry, my God, we Israel know you.

[20:46] We're yours. We belong to you. We have this relationship with you. They make the claim to cover up their wrongdoing. They make the claim to cover up the fact that they have actually committed themselves to kings and to princes, to palaces, to fortified cities, to silver and gold and idols.

They've committed themselves elsewhere and yet to cover it up they claim, no, we're in relationship with you. We cry out to you. We know you. And God, in verse 4, takes their claim with very little

seriousness.

No seriousness at all. What they're doing is explained in terms of, again, this self-help that making idols to help themselves, setting up kings to help themselves and princes so that in time they will turn around and do them a favor.

Establishing commitments with other people instead of a stronger commitment with God. God in order to self-help you along your way. They've gone ahead of God.

Instead of sitting back and seeking his guidance of what to do next, they've just gone ahead of him. Well, we'll have a king over here, we'll have a prince over there and we'll just hope that God will send his blessing upon it.

[ 22 : 05 ] And yet God quite clearly says, no, the kings that you have made but not through me. You did that all by yourselves. That's not my doing. That's your doing.

You set up princes but I never knew them. The people that you have chosen, I've not chosen.

You've just gone ahead and then you would expect me to bless your efforts.

God doesn't bless your efforts in that way when we go ahead of God and do what we want to do.

They are bypassing essentially God's guidance over their life.

Like someone reading a horoscope and then asking God to bless their day. you've already bypassed God. You've gone to an idol seeking guidance when God is the only one who can direct your life.

So to repent of that idolatry is the call, isn't it? And that's what they ought to be doing and of course that's what they're not doing. It's like a wife or a husband.

[ 23 : 12 ] Imagine it within a marriage but both the wife or the husband whichever it could be are just doing their own thing. They're living as if they are single but they're within a marriage.

And so one of them could say to the other you know do you not do you not think that you are living independently of me? Do you not think that you are you are living your own life?

Do you not think that you're living as if you're single when actually you're married? And that the claim could be but we are married. I have the certificate to prove it and then the wife could say okay but this is no kind of relationship.

The counterclaim can be made. The while the claim can be made that the wedding certificate can be produced to prove that a marriage exists the counterclaim can be made that okay but there is no relationship.

There's a certificate to say on that day we got married but look at all the evidence around us today to indicate there's no actual relationship. And of course that there is the beginning of the breakdown of everything because they want to make but we got the certificate we're legally married we're together and God said no that's you want to point to something that's not real and I'm trying to point to what is real today.

[ 24 : 38 ] And so the illustration of marriage marriage is an apt one through the book of Hosea because that is how God explains things all the time. So being married and living like you're single is no kind of relationship and that's exactly what God's people are doing.

They're in a covenantal marriage with God and yet they're living as if they're not. They're just doing their own thing setting up kings setting up princes building going behind palaces and fortified cities were just doing their own thing but they cried to God no we're yours we know you and God quite clearly is indicating to them this is no kind of relationship none whatsoever.

Now the reason why their type of behavior can be looked upon as a kind of self help is because it is in absolute not ignorance but avoidance of God they're just going ahead on their own they are effectively doing things that will help them and therefore it's a self help they're not seeking their help from God God will help he'd pour out his blessing on his people he's already told them time and a time away but they're forsaking his guidance they're forsaking his blessing and they're putting all their time and effort into idols into other people into foreign alliances as though that is where strength is to be found that that is where hope is to be found that that is where my help that is from where my help will come and that is not from where the help will come they pay more attention to all of those things than they actually do to God who made them how easy it is to forget that God made us and made those things that we even come to trust in they are not trustworthy

God is trustworthy so they're ignoring God they are avoiding God and yet their claim still remains no we know you and the no on their part is no we're in this we're in this relationship but God says no God does not look upon their claim as evidence of what is actually happening they have put their trust in idols verse 4 with their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction they've just

done their own thing so the command then that the people have failed to keep is the command to remember and forgetfulness therefore is not just absent mindedness and this is the next thing we must understand as an act of instruction why do the people of God forget God why do they do it why do you do it why do I do it I like to think that I've got a reasonably good memory some would say that it can often be selective my selective memory apparently is perfect my unselected memory is not so perfect but I like to think that I've got a pretty good memory but that's not the issue when it comes to forgetting God you're not being absent minded about certain facts you're not being absent minded about the fact that God is there you're not being absent minded even about the fact that God sent his son Jesus Christ to die on the cross to take away your sin and to bring you home to bring you to him that's what God has done for you it's easy to remember all of that and yet still forget that

[ 28 : 42 ] God is your maker well what am I doing when that happens well in the book of Deuteronomy which is where you find with the use of remembrance quite a lot the command to remember and the danger of forgetting is found throughout the book of Deuteronomy quite a lot that God's people have to show their working out and Deuteronomy is about showing your working out remembering and reminding yourselves that you know what you believe and why you believe it and what God has done and why God has done it and you hold all of these truths to keep you strong in the faith that you understand their meaning and their importance and God's accomplishments in all of them and by doing that you're not forgetting and you're not forgetting not because you're keeping them in your mind but you're keeping them as commitments you're committed to understanding its meaning you're committed to knowing what it means to live the life that

God has given you and so wherever there is a failure to commit to the things of God there is then the beginning of forgetfulness so forgetfulness straight the book of Deuteronomy and also here in Hosea 8 is not absent mindedness but it's neglect of God you're neglecting God in several different ways it's not that you have forgotten God hence why they can still make the claim we know you we're yours but you are neglecting God you're forgetting God through your neglect through your commitment to the things that God has given you and one of the ways that happens in the people of God of hold is often through prosperity prosperity that when God blesses his people and they don't consider their prosperity is actually coming from God because it's been too easy it's almost bread's coming down from heaven we go into a land flowing with milk and honey and we just got everything at our fingertips everything is up for grabs and there we have it and it doesn't take long for people to enjoy the blessings more than the the people enjoy to such an extent they actually begin to forget the one who gave those blessings and so they neglect

God in that way and then they make the second mistake of thinking that they actually achieve this all by themselves that I've worked hard for this this is mine because I've worked for it and okay part of that is true God enables you to provide for yourself God provides for you by enabling you to provide for yourself that is true we don't want to take that away from scripture we want to acknowledge the truth but at the same time God enabled you to provide for yourself and it's easy to forget that I did this all by myself no God enabled you to do it all by yourself and that's different and so when the people of God come to think that what they've got is the work of their own hands who needs God I've done it all by myself and so they easily get into this thinking of self help you can see how easily it can develop first it begins with neglecting then that leads to forgetting or neglect is forgetting then because you are not mindful of

God or committed to the things that he has taught you you then move into self help I did this all by myself and look at what I have and yet God is accusing his people rightfully that they are in a special place of forgetfulness and they are there because they have neglected him special not in a good way of course but it is almost a special case of forgetfulness not absent mindedness but the absolute neglect of God and in neglecting God verse 14 they build palaces and multiplied fortified cities in other words let's protect what we have let's store it up let's protect what we have because we don't want somebody taking it away from us and yet the world wind is coming they have sown to the wind and the world wind is about to come they've gone ahead of

God they've committed themselves to others rather than God they've introduced practices they claim relationship they're making commitments elsewhere they're setting up kings and princes they're building palaces and fortified city walls to protect everything that they got by themselves they think and yet they still claim we're God's people and yet God's saying you have forgotten me you have forgotten your maker in other words let me put it in a slightly different way everything for

God's people would turn around if only they turned around everything for you is a Christian for any Christian who's not here who's actually more in the position of the people of Hosea in this day everything would turn around for them if only they turned around everything would turn around because God is not holding his people back he's bringing his people home but nothing turns around for them because they don't turn around they don't come and acknowledge

[ 34 : 47 ] God and acknowledge their sin and seek his face and so verse 14 again brings us back to this eternal truth that whatever we're dealing with in life we're always dealing with God whatever we're dealing with in life we're always dealing with God what you reap is what you sow they have sown to the wind and they will reap the whirlwind God and this is God is God's saying you've brought it from God and God could make it not happen but this is sent from you and that would be true but verse 7 puts it in the context that the whirlwind has been sown back in the day it was sown you're only reaping what you have sown God is sending it of course God is sending it because whatever a person deals with in life they're always dealing with God but the way God is addressing it here in verse 7 is by addressing it in the context of what you sow is what you reap that what you sow in your life before

God is what you will reap and so they may say we've done nothing wrong but the evidence is whatever turns up in your life further down the road is evidence of how you've lived your life earlier on because what we sow is what we reap if you were to imagine a field where you saw a wheat field full it wouldn't be too difficult to figure out what was sown the evidence is in the harvest and so in the same way the evidence is in the whirlwind of what they sowed previously and this is how God is addressing his people you have brought it upon yourself but here's the exhortation then as we close trusting in something or someone else other than God is like sowing the wrong kind of seed and in time you'll reap the harvest trusting in something or someone else other than

God is sowing in the wrong area with the wrong kind of seed making commitments contrary to your relationship with God is like sowing the wrong kind of seed and the time of harvest will come whatever a person sows that person will also reap and in case you think that this is just something that is reserved and kept back into the Old Testament this is what Paul says in Galatians chapter 6 to a Christian believing church those who sow to the flesh from the flesh he will reap corruption but the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life what you sow you will also reap and so the experiences of God's people back then are instructions for God's people right now the lessons that God's people failed to learn back then are the lessons that we need to learn right now what we see is

God's standard and God's consistency and the fact that every part of our life is lived before God and no part of our life ever goes unnoticed and yet the call remains the same come home everything for you will turn around when you turn around everything for you will turn around when you turn around amen