

Psalms 31:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.

Analysis

I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. Two powerful metaphors describing complete insignificance and uselessness—forgotten like the dead, discarded like broken pottery. These convey psychological devastation of feeling worthless and purposeless.

Forgotten as a dead man captures identity erasure. Hebrew shakach means to cease to care for, ignore completely. Dead people pass from living memory. David feels he's experienced social death while alive—living oblivion where his presence makes no impact.

Out of mind (leb—heart) emphasizes emotional forgetting, not intellectual lapse. People don't accidentally overlook David; they've heartlessly excised him from concern and affection. This is willful disregard, active erasure.

I am like a broken vessel (Hebrew keli 'abad—destroyed, ruined implement) provides second metaphor. Pottery was Israel's most common household tool. Broken vessel is utterly useless, unable to fulfill created purpose, discarded as refuse. These metaphors illuminate gospel—humanity, broken by sin, has become useless vessels. But Christ, the Master Potter, redeems and remakes broken vessels into vessels of honor (Romans 9:21-23, 2 Timothy 2:20-21).

Historical Context

Forgotten dead reflects ancient burial practices. Without modern preservation, dead quickly passed from memory except for famous or nobility. Common people were forgotten within generations. David, despite being king, feels this common experience of human finitude.

Broken pottery was ubiquitous in ancient sites. Archaeological tells are full of sherds. Pottery broke easily and was inexpensive, so broken vessels were simply thrown on trash heaps. Every Israelite had broken pottery and knew it became instant garbage.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Have you experienced feeling forgotten or useless, and how did this affect identity and purpose?
2. How does the gospel message of God redeeming broken vessels speak to worthlessness feelings?
3. In what ways does modern culture's productivity emphasis intensify feeling like broken vessel?
4. How can church community combat feeling forgotten, especially among suffering, elderly, or marginalized?
5. What does God's commitment to remember and restore teach about covenant faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

נִשְׁכַּחְתִּי	כִּמְת	מִלְּב	הִי יִתִּי	כֶּלִי	אֶבֶד:
I am forgotten	as a dead man	out of mind	H1961	vessel	I am like a broken
H7911	H4191	H3820		H3627	H6

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 30:14 (Parallel theme): And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit.

Psalms 119:83 (Parallel theme): For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.

Psalms 2:9 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.