

Left All Alone

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[0:00] In John chapter 16 and verse 32, 'But a time is coming and has come when you will be scattered each to his own home.'

You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. The Lord Jesus was a real man.

In becoming our merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, it was necessary for him to share in our humanity, to be made like his brothers in every way.

And among other things, that means that he is a social creature. He was made for friendship and social interaction. After creating Adam and before he created Eve, the Lord God said, it is not good for the man to be alone.

And that was just as true of the perfect man, Jesus Christ, as it was for Adam. He, as man, was made for fellowship, for friendship, for social relationships and interaction with others.

[1:21] It was part of his humanity, part of what it means to be a human being. And so, just as you enjoy having others to share your deepest sorrows and greatest joys, so did he.

Kids, you feel this from your earliest years. You don't like to be alone. You like to be with others. You like to share friendship. You like being with mom and dad, brothers and sisters, and then other friends as you get older.

Children growing up without close relationships, such as are often found in orphanages, often have other developmental problems. It's not natural for us to be left alone, left to ourselves.

One of the worst features of being a leper in the Old Testament was that as long as he has the infection, he remains unclean and he must live alone.

He must live outside the camp, shut off from any social interaction. Ecclesiastes says there was a man all alone. He had neither son nor brother.

[2:39] That's part of Havel, part of frustration on the earth. Vanity of vanity. A man all by himself. Because two are better than one and a threefold strand is not easily broken.

Solitary confinement is a form of punishment to the human psyche. We were not made to be alone. God is praised in the Psalms as being the one who sets the lonely in families.

God made us social creatures.

And the Lord Jesus was made just like us in this area. So it said of him at age 12, he grew in stature physically and in wisdom and in favor with God and with men.

He grew in favor with men. He enjoyed human relationships with others. He sought them out. He developed friendships. Later on, we learn of his friendships with Mary, Martha and Lazarus there in Bethany.

[3:48] There were the 12 disciples with whom he shared so much in those last three years of his life as he was in constant interaction with them. But within the 12, there were the closer friends, weren't there?

The Peter, James and John whom he often took into closer confidence and shared even more intimately with them as friends.

But there were times he felt loneliness and it was not a good feeling as some of you know. Now someone might say, how could he ever feel lonely when he had all these people around him pressing in upon him at all times, it seems?

Well, if you've read much, you know that public figures are often lonely people. People who are found in the midst of public are often nevertheless some of the most lonely people that there are. John 1 says, He was in the world and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

[5:01] They didn't understand him and eventually they came to reject him. His own parents had not understood him. In Luke chapter 2, when he's 12 years old and his parents had lost him for three days and returned to Jerusalem and then found him, his mother said to him, as they found him there in the temple speaking to the teachers of the law, his mother said, Son, why have you treated us like this?

Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. Why were you searching for me? He asked. Didn't you know that I had to be in my father's house?

But they did not understand what he was saying to them, Luke tells us. And his own brothers did not understand him or believe in him. When the Jewish feast of tabernacles was being held up in Jerusalem and was near, Jesus' brother said to him, You ought to leave here and go to Judea so that your disciples may see the miracles you do.

No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you're doing these things, these great miracles, show yourself to the world. For, John says, even his own brothers did not believe in him.

They didn't understand his agenda as the Messiah. And they sought to give him advice on how to become a public figure like a campaign manager.

[6:31] You're going about this all wrong, they said. Get up into public and wow them there at the feast. And, even his own twelve disciples did not always understand his mission, did they?

When Jesus told them he was going up to Jerusalem where he would suffer many things from the Jewish religious leaders and be killed and rise the third day, one in the inner band, Peter, pulls him aside and rebukes him.

Lord, never will this happen to you. Never will it happen to you. So though our Lord was a social being, he had none on earth who fully understood his mission here on earth, who could sympathize with him in his inmost thoughts and plans.

And, as we'll see, this loneliness drove him to especially cherish his heavenly Father's fellowship. There was one in heaven who did understand him fully and who sympathized in all that he experienced here on this earth.

and Jesus was drawn as metal to a magnet to his heavenly Father in fellowship with his Father in heaven. So the Gospels tell us he was found often retreating to solitary places where he might speak to his Father and pour out his heart to him.

[8:00] He lived a shared life. Everything was shared with his Father. But this divine friendship and fellowship does not mean that he did not feel the pain of human loneliness.

It rather strengthened him through the pain. And though the twelve had their weaknesses and limitations of understanding their Lord's agenda, they were very precious to our Lord.

And as a man, he received so much from their friendship. And this comes out again in the pages of the Gospels. In John chapter 6, fairly early on in his ministry, when we read of Jesus' sermon, and after that sermon, it says that many of his followers turned back and no longer followed him.

Jesus then turned to the twelve and said, you do not want to leave too, do you? Do you feel anything of the heart of the Savior for the friendship of the twelve?

Everybody's leaving. You don't want to leave too, do you? Perhaps we appreciate too little the amount of comfort that the Lord Jesus felt on the human level and the encouragement that he received by the friendship of the twelve and their faithfulness in continuing to follow him when most were deserting him.

[9:31] On the night he was to be betrayed, he knew the enemy's rage was ripening and the growing rejection of the world only made the faithfulness of his own twelve all the more encouraging to him.

He tells them on that night in Luke 22, 28, you are those who have stood by me in my trials. Do you sense it?

What these men meant to him? You are the ones that have stood by me in my trials. When his enemies had slandered him, the multitudes had rejected him, these men gathered in that upper room had stuck with him, stood by him, not ashamed to identify with him as their Lord even when it was unpopular to do so.

And all of this underscores the social aspect of Jesus' humanity, how much he received from his friends, how he sought their companionship, and how he enjoyed their support.

So just hours before his crucifixion, he went with his disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane. He's now to look one last time into that cup of God's wrath that's been placed into his hands before actually going to the cross and drinking it.

[10:57] And he wants human companionship in this time of his greatest agony yet. And so he takes the twelve into the Garden and he tells them to sit there while he goes on further to pray.

But he took Peter, James, and John with him further, wanting the help of his closest friend in this darkest hour and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled with them.

And he tells this inner group of disciples, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.

With me. And then he went a little farther and fell on his face to the ground and prayed, my father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me, yet not as I will, but as you will.

This cup was the cause of his deep distress and bitter anguish, overwhelming sorrow. And then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping.

[12:05] What? Could you not keep watch with me? Keep watch with me for one hour? He asked Peter.

Can you hear the disappointment of his heart? He sought the support of his closest friends in his darkest hour, but they were too sleepy to offer him anything of human support.

Then came the arresting mob with Judas Iscariot. And again, could it be that we've made too little of the pain that the Lord Jesus felt by being done in, betrayed by one so close as Judas?

Yes, he knew all along who it was that was to betray him, but that knowledge did not obliterate the pain that he must have felt in having a close friend and trusted companion turn on him and betray him.

In Psalm 41, David had felt this very pain and he cries to God in that psalm, even my close friend whom I trusted, he who shared my bread has lifted up his heel against me.

[13:22] And that experience was to be the same as our Lord himself who himself quotes that passage as he refers to his betrayer. My close friend whom I trusted, who we ate with, who shared my bread, he's the one who's lifted up his heel against me.

Zechariah 13, 6, if someone asks him, what are these wounds on your body? He will answer, the wounds I was given in the house of my friends.

Wounds given in the house of my friends. Does that not make the wound all the more bitter and sharp? to be wounded in the house of your friends by your very friends.

And it reminds us of those words of Jesus to Judas in the garden. Friend, friend, do what you came for.

Wounded by a friend. And then at his arrest, his disciples all forsook him and fled in order that the scriptures might be fulfilled which said, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

[14:36] Although that did not catch the Lord by surprise, it nevertheless hurt him, even as it would hurt you to have all your friends desert you in your hour of greatest need.

Paul speaks of that. At my first trial, he says, in 2 Timothy, no one stood with me, but everyone deserted me. Ah, but the Lord stood at my side.

The Lord felt this desertion of all the disciples. Now, look back again at John 6, 32.

Because it was earlier this very night, just hours before Judas came and all the disciples deserted him, that Jesus had told them in the last part of verse 32, you will leave me all alone yet I am not alone for my father is with me.

Well, that has now happened. They had all forsaken him. He's now cut off from all human companionship. He's left all alone.

[15:46] Yet he says, I am not alone. What's the answer to this riddle? Left all alone, yet not alone.

well, it's his next words for my father. My father is with me. This had been and was then our Lord's greatest comfort in life.

My father is with me. My father is with me. Like an unseen underground river, the presence of his father was a source of never failing joy and peace.

When misunderstood, despised, and rejected by men, this had ever been his refuge. My heavenly father, always with me. Always with me. When the Pharisees had challenged his authority in John chapter 8, Jesus replied, but if I do judge, my decisions are right because I am not alone, I stand with the father who sent me.

Later in that same chapter, the one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him. He always knew the father's smiling face upon him, and this felt awareness of his father's presence and love had been his lifeline in every trouble, his peace and turmoil, his joy in loneliness.

[17 : 21] And so now when his twelve disciples had left him all alone, he was not really alone because his father was with him. So once again, this was his greatest comfort in life.

It's a presence that he had enjoyed with the father for all eternity past. His father's presence had been the very atmosphere which he had lived in.

Alone, but not alone. Because my father is with me. And yet that felt awareness of his father's presence and love was soon to be interrupted for the first time ever.

As just a few hours later, our Lord was hanging on the cross. In those strange three hours of darkness at midday, it was the darkness of divine judgment when Christ was made sin for us and took the blame and bore the wrath.

It was during those three dark hours. And out of that darkness, after those three hours, out of the darkness of Golgotha, he cries with a loud, passionate voice, my God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

[18 : 47] Why have you forsaken me? And we realize that the outer darkness is matched by an inner darkness in the heart of our Savior.

The darkness of midnight within. God, my God, my God, I have known what it is for my people, Israel, to forsake me.

I have known what it is even to have my own twelve forsake me, but never you. Why have you forsaken me?

You have always been there when I've been forsaken by the others. my lifeline in that time has been that you are with me. You know the comfort I have drawn from your presence.

You know how I've turned to you in my trouble and you've always been there for me. Oh, but this is nothing less than the outer darkness of hell to have you forsake me.

[19 : 54] Commentators are of little help to us in opening up the passion of our Savior in that statement. Who can know the depths of woe in the heart of Jesus at that point?

To feel darkness where he had always felt light. To see a frown where he had always seen a smile. To feel cursed where he had always felt blessed. to feel nothing but wrath where he had always known his Father's loving favor.

Forsakenness where he had only ever known his presence and sweet fellowship. He was feeling the forsakenness of hell. The fury of God's wrath was not even a drop of his mercy.

You see, that's what he saw coming in that cup when in the garden earlier. He prayed, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. It was the very pains of hell that he was to feel on the cross.

[21 : 05] It was death under God's curse and wrath. And if he was horse struck at the thought of it in Gethsemane, what must it have been to actually drink the cup on Golgotha.

Calvin says nothing is more horrible than to incur the judgment of God whose wrath is worse than all deaths. And that's what he drank.

And so when left all alone on the cross, shut off from any human support, and his soul looking to his Father for help and companionship then, rather than finding the help and finding the love and the sweetness of fellowship with God, he only sees wrath.

He only feels forsakenness. And why? All for us. All for us. This for us, that we might never know the forsakenness that our sins deserve.

but may know instead the eternal favor and presence and smile of God for all eternity. That's what he won for us by his most painful desertion.

[22 : 30] For me, kind Jesus, was thine incarnation, thy mortal sorrow and thy life's oblation, thy bitter anguish and thy bitter passion for my salvation.

salvation. It was my sin that interrupted the sweet life-giving fellowship between the Father and the Son. He is forsaken that I might never be. He must feel so all alone that I may never again be alone. That's what our sins deserved. And so it was necessary that our substitute, when standing in the place of judgment for us, must feel something of the forsakenness of hell in order to redeem us from our sins.

So, child of God, there is one who understands your loneliness. Maybe someone here is lonely tonight, surrounded with friends, loving husband, wife, but no one understands.

Jesus knows what it is to be lonely. Who was more alone than you'll ever be, when even his felt communion with his Father was severed because of the sins of his people which you bore.

[23 : 51] He did it so that in your loneliness and need, you might always know God is with you, an ever-present help in your trouble, a friend to sympathize with you, to daily carry your burdens, a comforter to draw alongside and encourage you, a Savior always at hand to rescue you from enemies too strong for you.

Yes, he did it so that in some dark midnight of your soul, when feeling all alone, and in your desperation, you cry out to your Heavenly Father and you find him ever near to you to forgive your sin, to bear your burden, to be attentive to your cry, to be mighty to save for you, know that you owe it all to the forsakenness of Jesus by his own Heavenly Father on your behalf.

You and the Father in perfect intimacy forever. Blessed fruit of Jesus being forsaken for you on the cross.

So bring all your loneliness, your feelings of forsakenness to the cross and see him and listen to him being forsaken that you might never be, but you might know the smile and friendship of God forever.

Believe on it. Act fresh faith upon it as you look to Christ tonight. That's what he purchased for us.

[25 : 27] He's opened up a new and living way whereby we can always, wherever we are, whatever our condition, look heavenward and have fellowship with God. Let's make use of that new and living way.

Has he shed blood? Is our way to God paved with blood and tears? Then let us treasure that privilege and make use of it throughout our day as we draw near through the wounds and the forsakenness of our Savior.

There's mystery here. Jesus experiencing the forsakenness and wrath of his Father and yet his Father never stopped loving his Son.

The Son was never more loved by his Father than when he was being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. When the Father sees his Son obeying even to go to Calvary, the Father loves him, but the Son feels nothing of that love.

The Son senses that love has vanished and cries out in his forsakenness. As a Son, he is loved. As our substitute, he is forsaken. And yet, through the feelings of being forsaken for us, he still cries, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[26 : 51] He still latches on by faith to the fact that God is his Father. And that faith was not disappointed. May we learn from our Savior in our times of forsakenness then to still cling, still believe that this God is our God.

Forever and ever he will be our God even unto death. Let's take our hymnals and sing as our response to his word, O mystery of love divine, number 436.

436. The third verse we sing, for thee the Father's hidden face, for thee the bitter cry, for us the Father's endless grace, the song of victory.

Let's stand as we sing 436.