

#70 “Never Alone Again”

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No believer should ever have to feel lonely because of the many brothers and sisters in Christ that he or she has, yet for one reason or another, it is possible to feel intensely alone at times. Perhaps a person is recently widowed. Maybe a house full of children is suddenly empty as the children move away to start their own lives. Perhaps a spouse abandons the other or emotionally checks out on the relationship. Maybe none of the other kids at school accept a lone individual who becomes an outcast. Then again, maybe society looks down on a certain person because of race, age, past experiences, etc. The world can be a lonely place. Life brings with it its share of betrayals, griefs, and losses. Friends move away or friends just change and go their own way. In a world of such flux and uncertainty, how can we be assured that we will never deal with unceasing, oppressive loneliness? Surely, even as believers, as circumstances change, we might feel lonely at times, but the issue is how do we press on and move on? How do we go from a steady agony of aloneness to a feeling of peace and security? The answer may be as God provides us brothers and sisters to encourage us, and He will always give us what we need and never more than we can handle by His grace. But even when it seems that we are on an island with no one but ourselves to keep us company, there is still hope. Even if we were isolated in a solitary prison cell because of our faith for Christ, we could have companionship. Even if the masses misjudge us and abandon us, we can still have a Friend who is closer than a brother. Whether an orphan, a widow, alone in a nursing home, or alone in a crowd of admirers, true friendship is possible through our Savior Jesus Christ. At all times and in all places and situations, He will be there for His children. Such is our privilege as a child of God. How and why is this possible?

As Christ died on the cross for us because of His great love for us, He suffered in a way that was likely far greater than any of the bodily abuse and mutilation that He had to endure: His own Father forsook Him (Matthew 27:46). The word for forsaken means just that, abandoned, left alone, left helpless, left behind, and deserted. Because the sins of the world were placed upon Christ (Isaiah 53:6), God the Father could no longer look upon His Son. He had to let Him go and let Him die. Such was His good and perfect plan because He would soon raise Him from the dead in victory, having conquered sin and death so that we could be free in Him. But for the time being, Jesus suffered in a way that we cannot even begin to fathom. This was God in the flesh, and His own Father, Whom He was One with, deserted Him. There cannot be a greater feeling of being alone than Jesus felt on the cross as He was dying. This is just one of the ways in which we have a Savior Who can sympathize with what we have to face and endure (Hebrews 4:15). He knew what it was to be alone. The disciples scattered as the Shepherd was struck (Mark 14:27). Rome had no love for Him. The Jews hated Him. His brothers and sisters didn't receive Him as Messiah. He was rejected across the board, and then to top it off, He had

to be rejected by the Father Himself. There is no greater loneliness than this. Indeed, our Savior understands when we feel alone.

Perhaps this is why He is so adamant that we remember that we are never left alone. In Hebrews 13:5, we read, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU." He was left and forsaken so that God would never have to leave us. Once saved, we would always be His, and nothing and no one could ever snatch us out of His hand (John 10:28-29). Not only this, but God is not afar off. He, even the Father Himself, let alone Christ and the Spirit, has made His abode within our hearts (John 14:23). God, Who cannot be confined and Who fills all things, has decided that those who put their faith in Christ will be His dwelling place. So God is never far away or somewhere out there for the child of God. He is always near, here, and in our hearts. We are never alone, and never will we be abandoned. The Shepherd will never leave His sheep. As Psalm 23:4 says, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Jesus has all authority, and it is His decree that He will be in us and always with us. Praise God for His constant friendship and perfect companionship!

If we feel alone even though we have God in our hearts, we need to draw near to Him because He promises to then draw near to us (James 4:8). If God seems far away, maybe it is because the devil is tricking us into thinking that way. Maybe we have let our feelings begin to inform our minds that God is absent, when of course, our feelings are leading us astray. We need to think through why we might be feeling apart from God because God never leaves us. Thus, if He feels distant, it is our move to draw near. We should take some time to praise Him, to pray to Him, to hear Him as we read His Word, and to call out to Him. If we have sin, we need to deal with it because God won't hear our prayers otherwise (Psalm 66:18).

Let us not be duped by the devil into thinking that God has abandoned us or given up on us. He doesn't do that. Jonah ran from God, but even a child can understand that he could never get away from God. David said that there was no place He could run where God wasn't already there. Not even darkness could hide him from God (Psalm 139:7-12). God is always there, and He is in our hearts as believers. We need to take comfort in His nearness, believing Him to be close and cultivating our relationship and friendship with Him. Psalm 73:28 says, "But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works." It is by faith that we are to choose to believe that God is near and that He is our refuge. He is near, and He is our refuge. The only question is will we take our refuge in Him and believe that He is indeed near. May it be, Lord, may it be.