

The Cure for Loneliness

John 16:31-33

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

“Do you now believe?” Jesus replied. ³²“A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. ³³“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

In the third year of a great drought the word of the Lord came to me and said I was to present myself to King Ahab and give him the message that rain was about to fall on the land (18:1-2)! Even though the king despised me for pointing out his wicked ways (18:18) I approached him with great confidence for the Lord showed me He is ever near by providing me with water to drink from a brook and bread and meat from ravens during this long drought (17:1-6). On the way I met the manager of Ahab’s house, Obadiah a devoted follower of the Lord,¹ and I convinced him despite the personal risk to ask the king to meet me (18:1-15). Confident in the Lord I challenged the 450 prophets of Baal to have their god light their sacrifice and after taunting them relentlessly and them getting no answer (18:27-29), I prayed and God visually demonstrated His might and power by burning even the stones up in the sacrifice I prepared for Him. It was wonderful to hear the people cry “The Lord – He is God! The Lord – He is God” and it was good to have all those false prophets executed (18:38-40). The joy of vindication and the people looking to God was amazing but short lived. When the king told his wife Jezebel what had happened, she made an oath to kill me. Her ruthless reputation of killing the Lord’s prophets (18:4) cut to my very soul and I ran terrified for my life! Feeling like I was the only one left who loved God (19:10) I felt such intense loneliness that I prayed that God would take my life that very day (19:3-5)!

While this monologue is not the direct words of Elijah it does accentuate how easy loneliness creeps into the heart of even a believer! While one might feel confident in one’s faith, rarely are we as strong as we imagine!² Let me tell you a story of the boy who thought “he could”

“A number of years ago my first assistant at Tenth Presbyterian Church told me something that he had remembered from his early childhood. He had been helping his father put some things on the dining-room table, and he had asked

¹ James M. Kennedy, [“Obadiah \(Person\).”](#) ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1162.

² James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1239.



to carry something that his father judged to be too heavy for him. He argued with his father, making many protestations. “Please, Father, I know I can carry it. I am sure I can.” At last his father let him try. He started out confidently and carefully, but suddenly he dropped the container and the liquid spilled. He told me that he learned one of the great lessons of his life that day as he stood staring down at the

spilled mess and the broken container. He felt absolutely chagrined; he had been so sure of himself. But his father had been right after all, and he was wrong.”³

Like the father in this story Jesus told the disciples that their presumed, strong faith was actually quite weak.⁴ He told them that they would abandon Him and scatter each to his own little world.⁵ They would eventually come back to each other’s side but would still feel intense loneliness, as those left shepherdless to face a hostile world! Unfortunately the loneliness that one sees in the eyes of the lepers and hears in the voices of the blind and the beggars of the Bible resonates in our hearts because “no believer traverses all the road to heaven in company”⁶ but must experience seasons of perceived or realized isolation.

Reasons why Christians Sometimes Feel Lonely

There are many circumstances in which Christians experience loneliness, a few of which I will mention briefly. The obvious reason many feel alone is due to not having any close friends that one can confide one’s deepest, darkest secrets. Scripture says, “two are better than one” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10) because they can pick each other up but it is far from easy to find unconditional friendship amongst this “self-absorbed” generation. The “absence of a godly society”⁷ also means those who choose to obey God’s word will experience the loneliness that comes from being persecuted both within and outside of the church. As weightier issues of

³ James Montgomery Boice, [*The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1240.

⁴ Barclay Moon Newman and Eugene Albert Nida, [*A Handbook on the Gospel of John*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 520.

⁵ James Montgomery Boice, [*The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1240.

⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, [*“Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.”*](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 389.

⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, [*“Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.”*](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 390.

holiness go against the norms of our culture those who try to be obey the “forgotten” or less popular doctrines of the Bible are often accused of having an “innovating, fanatical spirit”⁸ that



is legalistically trying to create schisms inside the church.⁹ Another source of loneliness is deep soul-conflict.¹⁰ As the old Adam rages war with our new self we grapple with horrid temptations/sin that we feel are so heinous and unique to us that we dare not share them with another, lest we lose their respect and supposed friendship.¹¹ Another source of loneliness comes from unnoticed, kingdom labor.¹² The “earnest prayers and deep devotedness”¹³ of those who pray and plant seeds that are not publicly visible¹⁴ are often overlooked

and feel like they are “alone” in serving. And finally, Christians often feel loneliness with the prospect of death because their “weeping company”¹⁵ of friends and family cannot go with them through the valley of death!

Times when Jesus was “Alone”

Our sympathetic high priest Jesus knows what it is like to be “alone.” The very night that Jesus was to be arrested He took the eleven disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. While eight stayed outside the garden gate, the inner circle of Peter, James and John were asked to stay “at a stone’s distance”¹⁶ and “keep watch” (Matthew 26:38) while Jesus went to pray to His Father. Even though His “sweat was like drops of blood” (Luke 22:44) and His soul was

⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 391.

⁹ James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1241.

¹⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 392.

¹¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 390.

¹² C. H. Spurgeon, [“Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 392.

¹³ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 393.

¹⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 393.

¹⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 394.

¹⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 385.



“exceedingly sorrowful”¹⁷ when He returned to His inner three they were found not to be watching, weeping and praying¹⁸ with Him but were fast asleep! Aware of their lack of faith Jesus knew this was just the tip of the iceberg of the disciple’s impending failure.¹⁹ Imagine how Jesus must have felt when the “son of perdition betrayed his Friend and Master to merely win some blood-money!”²⁰ Imagine the loneliness that Jesus felt when upon His arrest His own lost faith and “deserted Him and fled” (Mark 14:50)!²¹ Even Peter who swore he would never abandon Jesus though he “bravely” followed the arresting party at a distance back to Jerusalem²² would later deny him three times and run away from His presence. The eleven were not traitors but cowards²³ that had not yet realized Jesus truly was the Lord of all things seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16)!



Jesus was also “alone” at His trial. Imagine despite knowing the evil intent and darkest sins of the false witnesses, remaining silent (Matthew 26:63). Either at the mock trial of the Sanhedrin or the trial before Pilate not a single witness came forward to testify to the “honesty, quietness and genuine truth of Jesus’ life.”²⁴ Surely

¹⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 387.

¹⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 386.

¹⁹ Merrill C. Tenney, “[John.](#)” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: John and Acts*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 160.

²⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 387.

²¹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 632.

²² James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1240.

²³ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 386.

²⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 386.

the crowds of 5,000 and 4,000 that were fed by His hand could attest to His authenticity! Surely the official's son, Peter's mother in law, the centurion's servant, the paralytic, the man with the withered hand, the woman with the flow of blood, Jairus' daughter, the mute man, the invalid, the demon possessed, Lazarus and the many who were healed of blindness, deafness and leprosy would have plenty to say about the might, power and love of their Savior! While He had told them to not tell anyone about their miraculous healings was that not just meant to be kept secret before His arrest? Was this not the right time to speak out and claim they were lost but Christ reached out and saved them? Surely those who listened to the Sermon on the Mount or the disciples who were taught and tried to live His word for three years had plenty to say in defense of the predicted suffering servant of Isaiah?²⁵ And yet we find in both trials no one came forward and spoke a single word of defense. Jesus was to face death "alone."

Though Jesus was not literally alone at the cross in a deep spiritual sense He was more alone then than any other time while on earth.²⁶ Though John and His mother Mary were close



by²⁷ and the thief would come to believe in Him, the role of the Suffering Servant was such that "desertion was a necessary ingredient in that cup of vicarious suffering."²⁸ The Shepherd must be struck, the sheep must scatter lest prophesy not be fulfilled (Zechariah 13:7).²⁹ Though humanity "remained unworthy of being redeemed,"³⁰ the sinless, Lamb of God³¹ who was to be slain before the foundation of the world chose to appease His Father's righteous wrath by being pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (Isaiah

53:4-5). By His mighty arm Christ alone defeated the prince of this world (John 12:32)³² and the

²⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Christ's Loneliness and Ours.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 386.

²⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Christ's Loneliness and Ours.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 386.

²⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Christ's Loneliness and Ours.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 388.

²⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Christ's Loneliness and Ours.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 387.

²⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2005), 428.

³⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Christ's Loneliness and Ours.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 388.

³¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1244.

³² George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 288.

“whole of hell’s battalions”³³ and in doing so freed His people from the power of sin and death.³⁴ Despite the temptation to chose an easier path Christ hung firm on that cross and despite being forsaken He tenderly committed His spirit into His Father’s hands (Matthew 27:46; Luke 23:46).

The Cure for Loneliness

Though everyone would abandon Him Jesus told His disciples there would never be a time when He was truly alone for the Father was always with Him. The Father was present at His birth, at the temple at age 12, as He grew up in wisdom, during His temptation and baptism,



for the three years of His ministry, in the Garden, upon His arrest, at both trials and yes even upon the cross! Though abandoned by all Jesus was able to peacefully and with great calmness stand before the Sanhedrin and Pilate and not speak a single “hasty or complaining” word.³⁵ Unlike the disciples who were “scattered, confused and isolated,”³⁶ during the passion week Jesus was able to stand firm, not as one crushed by loneliness but who felt unspeakable peace because He knew the Father would always be with Him.³⁷ Even in that

terrible moment when He quoted Psalms 22:1³⁸ and cried out “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?, Jesus was not crushed nor was He confessing thoughts of being eternally deserted. Jesus knew separation from God for a short period of time was the eternal plan necessary to appease the Father’s wrath against humanity so that sin and death might no longer have mastery over those He dearly loved!

³³ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 387.

³⁴ James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1244.

³⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 388.

³⁶ James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1241.

³⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Christ’s Loneliness and Ours.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 53 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), 389.

³⁸ George R. Beasley-Murray, [John](#), vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 288.

In contrasting Jesus' fickle followers with his faithful Father,³⁹ one learns that the cure to loneliness is not found by surrounding oneself with "faithful friends" who merely try love and know your soul but by embracing the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's continual loving presence!



While it is near impossible to find unconditional friendship that can bear the darkest of secrets of our souls amongst this self-absorbed generation, in turning to Jesus we will find a relationship of closeness and peace that goes beyond human understanding. Jesus is our Lord, Savior, king and yes, our absolute best friend! He knit us in our mother's wombs and despite knowing every sin we have or will ever do (Psalms 139), He loves us with an undying love that will last for an eternity! While having a

relationship with Him will not stop us from going through persecution and tribulations but will instead give us the means to persevere and mature in the faith that the rivers of peace and His love will never end. I want to finish this sermon with the following story.

"In 1874 a French steamer called the *Ville du Havre* was on a homeward voyage from America when a collision with a sailing vessel took place. The damage to the steamer was considerable, and as a result it sank quickly with the loss of nearly all who had been on board. One passenger, Mrs. Horatio G. Spafford, the wife of a lawyer in Chicago, had been en route to Europe with her four children. On being informed that the ship was sinking she knelt with her children and prayed that they might be saved or, if not, that they might be willing to die, if that was God's will. When the ship went down, the children were all lost. Mrs. Spafford was rescued by a sailor who had been rowing over the spot where the ship had sunk and found her floating in the water. Ten days later, when she reached Cardiff, she sent her husband the message: "Saved alone." This was a great blow, a sadness hardly comprehensible to anyone who has not lost a child. But though a great shock, it did not destroy the peace that either of the parents, who were both Christians, had from Jesus. Spafford wrote as a testimony to the grace of God in his experience"⁴⁰

For those of you who do not know it was Horatio G. Spafford who wrote "when sorrows like sea-billows roll, whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well with my soul."

³⁹ D. A. Carson, "[The Gospels and Acts.](#)" in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2188.

⁴⁰ James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1241–1242.