

“OVERCOMING LONELINESS”

Eph.3:20-21; Psa.68:5-6

INTRODUCTION:

- A. When Janis Joplin [1943-1970] was found dead in her hotel room at the age of 27, questions arose as to whether the cause of her death was suicide or an accident. Later the police reported they had found a small quantity of heroin in the rock singer's room. There were fresh needle marks on her arm. Just before her death she admitted to a friend, *"When I'm not on the stage I just lie around, watch television, and feel very lonely."* That one remark strikes a sympathetic chord in all our hearts, for LONELINESS is an acute problem that BOTH young and old face today.
- B. Thomas Wolfe, an American novelist (1900-1938), once wrote that loneliness, *"far from being a rare and curious phenomenon, peculiar to myself and a few other solitary men, is the central and inevitable fact of human existence."*
- C. The world-famous historian, H G Wells, said on his 65th birthday, *"I am 65, and I am lonely."* And in even more recent times, the late Dag Hammarskjold, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, confessed sadly in his private diary, *"Alone beside the moorland spring, once again you are aware of your loneliness, as it is and always has been."*
- D. As we study our Bible, we discover that God never intended for His human creatures to be lonely.
 1. When He created Adam He saw that it was *"...not good that man should be alone; [so He made] him a helper comparable to him"* – Gen.2:18
 2. The psalmist tells us that our God is a Father to the fatherless and a Protector to the widows. **READ TEXTS:** Psa.68:5-6- *"A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation. 6) God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land."* Eph.3:20-21- *"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21) to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."*
 3. In these words we can learn a little something about the life of loneliness. Observe:

I. THE MISERY OF LONELINESS

- A. As we reflect on this condition of loneliness we can surely be impressed with the accuracy of David's language. Even though his primary reference was to the loneliness of the nation in captivity, the point he makes is true of the lonely life of a single individual!
- B. There is THE BOREDOM OF SOLITUDE!
 1. The word solitary that's used in the KJV means *"the state of being alone."* Such a condition of remoteness from human contact produces all kinds of stress and pressure.
 2. In fact, it is the condition of bored loneliness that often leads to suicide.
 3. A N.Y. City newspaper gave this short story: *"The body of a man above 70 years old was recovered from the Sputen Duyvil Creek yesterday. Police found this note: 'I'm Joe Barnes. No records. No relatives. No friends. No permanent address. Just plain tired of living.'" Isn't that such a sad obituary of a man overcome by the boredom of solitude?*
 4. Inasmuch as the church is merely a microcosm of the larger community in which we live, I think it would probably be fair to say that even within this tiny community of believers, we have some who are suffering from this kind of intense boring solitude. We have an obligation to sooth that suffering whenever and however we possibly can. *"REACH OUT AND TOUCH SOMEONE."*
- C. There is THE BONDAGE OF SERVITUDE!
 1. 68:6 - It is significant to note that in addition to being LONELY in Egypt, God's ancient people were also SLAVES in Egypt.
 2. This is also OFTEN TRUE in our own lives. When we are LONELY we sense not only boredom, but BONDAGE.

- a) Sometimes it is bondage to our own fears, failures, and frustrations.
 - b) Inevitably, prolonged periods boredom lead to bondage - and nothing is more miserable!
 - c) Does this describe your life? Are you lonely and miserable?
3. One New Year's Day a millionaire, whose pride it was never to offer a tip for any service given nor a compliment for any job well-done, faced an unforgettable tragedy: his chief accountant committed suicide. WITH IMMEDIATE HORROR, The books were immediately audited, but found to be in perfect order, the affairs of the deceased man – who was a modest bachelor – were prosperous and orderly. The only letter left by the accountant was a brief note to his millionaire employer. It read: *"In thirty years I have never had one word of encouragement. I'm fed up!"*

II. THE MINISTRY OF LONELINESS

- A. *"God sets the solitary families...But the rebellious dwell in a dry land, [a desert land]" - 68:6*
1. God has so constituted us that when we rebel against Him we end up in a land of desolation and loneliness.
 2. Let's look at it together this way:
- B. The ministry of loneliness teaches us that “rebellion~isolates~ the life.”
1. **68: 6** - *"the rebellious dwell in a dry [desert] land..."*
 - a) Perhaps the most telling illustration of the relationship between rebellion and isolation is the gut wrenching story of the prodigal son (**Lk 15**).
 - b) Rebellion not only isolated the son from his father, but also the young man from his so-called "friends."
 - c) The Bible tells us that he ended up in a field, ALL ALONE, feeding pigs. But the redeeming feature is that loneliness brought him to himself, and eventually, crawling back to his father.
 2. We need to be aware of the heartache involved in loneliness so that we can be ministers to the lonely in drawing them to the LORD, the Great Physician!
- C. Ministering to those who are lonely makes us realize that rebellion will decimate the life!
1. When the prodigal son left home he had just oodles and **gobs of money**, and **plenty of plans**, but it was **REBELLION** that led him to **riotous living**, and then to **abject poverty**.
 2. The **narrowest letter in the alphabet** is **"I"** and it serves to symbolize how loneliness and sin strip us down to absolute nothingness so that we find ourselves *"dwelling in a desert land."*
 3. Things really haven't changed much.
More than any other human problem, loneliness, the absence of meaningful human connection, drains the joy and sense of purpose from our lives. It explains why people go to shopping centers who have no intention of shopping - they just need to be somewhere where other people are, hoping that among hundreds of strangers going by they will find one familiar, friendly face. It is why many people come home from work or school and immediately turn on the television.
They are not interested in the program; much of the time, they don't even know what is on. But they are desperate for the sound of another human voice in their lives.
 4. Many lonely people believe if they could only meet and marry the right person, that it would cure their loneliness, yet the sad truth is that even married people can be lonely and unconnected!
 6. But God is prepared to comfort us with assurances such as: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* (**Matt 5:3**).
 - a) Only when we will actually realize that sin will reduce us to nothing can we be led to pray with the words of the poet:
*Just as I am, without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come! I Come!* ~ Charlotte Elliot

- b) There are probably more individuals who have advanced down the aisle in obedience to the Lord's invitation to that song than any other. Why? Because it cuts to the core of our separation and solitude apart from the Lord God Almighty.

III. THE MASTERY OF LONELINESS

- A. *"God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound..." (68:6).*
1. Loneliness is one of the concerns that therapists hear about most frequently! It is a concern of all age groups, from people in their teens to those in their nineties.
 2. Many experts believe that loneliness has increased in modern times, and that often we're lonely **even when around other people!** But we also hear reports of people who live alone and do not feel that loneliness is a major concern.
 - a) Loneliness can be broken down into two types: social and emotional. A young person going away to college or someone taking a job in a new town may experience social loneliness, due to their being isolated from friends and family.
 - b) Emotional isolation can occur when we feel we have no one to talk with about our deepest concerns, OR that no one understands our needs. That is why we can experience loneliness even with people all around us.
 6. As we have stated already, there is a God-given answer to loneliness. God never intended for man to be a lonely, isolated individual. We are fundamentally social, and therefore must relate to somebody. Therefore we see that:
- B. God **CARES** for the lonely
1. David says, *"A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families..." (68:5-6).*
 2. Even though we may experience times when we feel that nobody cares, we must be assured that **GOD DOES CARE**, as in the gift of His dear Son, Jesus! [cf. Sun. AM lessons!]
 3. **John 3:16ff** - Jesus demonstrated this fact by leaving heaven and assuming a human body in order that He might dwell with men and women **as we are, where we are** - **Jno.1:1ff**
 4. Not only that, but He died willingly upon an instrument of torture that He might effect a reconciliation between rebellious sinners and an incomparable holy & loving God.
 - a) Having died, you know, He rose from the dead to become our loving Savior & Mediator!
 - b) Today, He continues to prove his astonishing love in His willingness to rescue us from the very fires of eternal torment with, *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me"* (**Rev 3:20**). So the master of loneliness is a God who reaches out to the lost and lonely.
 5. A man took a tour of a large sheep ranch in Australia at shearing time. During the visit his guide took a baby lamb from its pen and placed it with thousands of other sheep. The noise of their bleating and the shouting of the shearers was nearly deafening. The unweaned animal, looking dazed, remained still for a moment. Then, because it had been separated from its familiar surroundings, it began to let out weak, distressed baa's. Apparently those faint cries were answered immediately by the mother, for the feeble little creature began to walk slowly toward the far end of the enclosure where an old ewe had been standing. The lamb's mother began moving too, rushing to meet that little one as if no other sheep were present. Despite the noise and confusion, she had heard the pitiful bleating of her own frightened offspring.
 - a) **NEVER IMAGINE THAT YOU**, the object of God's special tender loving care, can **EVER** be beyond the reach of His sight or attention.
 - b) The heavenly Father **CAN LOCATE YOU**, in your distress and loneliness, as if there were no other child of His in the whole wide wonderful world.
 - c) He bends His loving ear to your faintest call for help, and hastens to your aid.
- C. God **CALLS** for the lonely - **68.6**

1. Ever since Adam and Eve rebelled in that beautiful Garden of Eden and entered into a state of lonely isolationism, God has been calling out - "...**ADAM... WHERE ARE YOU?**" **Gen.3:9**.
2. Adam is but an icon of your life and mine. GOD is calling US out of our boredom and bondage into His fellowship and freedom.
 - a) To respond to His call is to know absolute deliverance from loneliness, spiritual isolationism, and sin-guiltiness!
 - b) It doesn't matter what happens in your life, you will never be alone if you know and obey the God who cares for you and continually reaches out for you.

CONCLUSION:

- A. The Father had but one "*ONLY BEGOTTEN SON.*" For reasons *too lofty for us to comprehend*, He seeks to save us and sit us at His table and make us a close and familiar part of His holy family, the church. As only a man, Jesus could not have saved us; as God alone He would not save us in our sins. But, **INCARNATE**, He could and did. *O what matchless love we see, Jesus died for YOU and ME!*
- B. And so Christian brotherhood is not *an ideal which we must realize*; it is rather *a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate together*. The more clearly we learn to recognize that the ground and strength and promise of our fellowship is **IN JESUS CHRIST ALONE**, the more soberly we shall think of our **CONGREGATIONAL COMMUNITY** and **WORK** and **HOPE** and **PRAY** for it.
- C. The household of God awaits your arrival, that we might jointly engage in those things that honor HIM!
Communion is strength; solitude is weakness.
Alone, the fine old beech yields to the blast and lies prone on the meadow.
In the forest, supporting each other, the trees laugh at the hurricane. [the shallow-rooted redwood trees laugh at the turbulent winds]
The sheep of Jesus flock together.
*The **SOCIAL ELEMENT** is the genius of Christianity.* [Charles Spurgeon from "The Quotable Spurgeon"]