

# Loneliness

by Robert Constable

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*God understands our loneliness and comes to us, revealing himself to us in our loneliness, and reminding us that he will not leave us nor forsake us.*

**Duration:** 38:39

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 31:6, Judges 16:28, 1 Kings 19:9-10, Psalm 22:1-37, Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 43:1-2, John 14:18, John 14:26-27

**Topics:** "Loneliness", "God's Presence"

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## Description

Robert Constable addresses the pervasive issue of loneliness, emphasizing that it is an emotional experience rather than a physical state. He explores various causes of loneliness, such as bereavement, environmental changes, and feelings of rejection, and highlights biblical figures like Elijah, Moses, Samson, and Paul who experienced loneliness. Constable reassures that despite feelings of isolation, God is always present and will never forsake us, as demonstrated through scripture. He encourages the congregation to seek God's presence and to remember that true relief from loneliness comes from a relationship with Him. The sermon concludes with a reminder of Jesus' promise to be with us, even in our loneliest moments.

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## Transcript

Tonight we were concerned with a problem that men have, the problem of suffering. We learned from the word of God that suffering is not necessarily associated with sin or result of sin, but that it may just be the discipline of God. Then last week we took the problem of discouragement, about which I have been reminded two or three times during the past week, since my golf has not been the best.

Two or three times men have said, Didn't I hear you say, So your words come home to roost, you know, when you come up and minister the word of God. And having spoken of discouragement, I am told that I am not to be discouraged. Well, you know, this is the truth, isn't it? The Lord has had an answer for discouragement, and it's in himself.

One of the nice things about the Lord Jesus that I like, one of the statements is, He shall not fail nor be discouraged. The Lord Jesus isn't discouraged anyway, even though we may get discouraged sometimes. I told you the opening evening that we would consider problems in various areas of our lives, physical problems we have, and we have mental problems, and we have emotional problems, and spiritual problems.

And I said, I think I'll take a problem from each of these areas, forgetting at the moment that we have five nights, not four. And so, as I thought of this, I thought we'll have to put in another category, and those are volitional problems, because we have problems with our wills. And so that will be the addition that will make up the five that we will consider.

We've had the problem in the physical area, and that was suffering. We've had the problem in the mental area, and that was discouragement. And this evening, we are going to consider a problem in the emotional area.

And it's a problem that either has or will probably afflict every one of us. It is the problem of loneliness. It has a familiar sound, doesn't it? You know, very often in the paper, you will come upon a cartoon of somebody who has been washed up on a desert island and is all alone.

It may be about one thing or another, usually it's a joke, but the point that I want to make in referring to it is this, this is such a universal problem. Everybody can respond to this, this idea of being left alone. And so I have selected it as one of the problems for us to think about in this series.

It is a universal, or an almost universal, experience, and it has many causes. Now, we're acquainted, very well acquainted, with some of the causes of loneliness. Bereavement is one of the causes of loneliness that many, if not all of us, have had to face.

Another is a change in our environment. You know, we either move into a new area, or our situation changes, or people change, or circumstances change, and we feel left alone. And we have the experience of loneliness.

And another thing that can bring loneliness to us is a sense of rejection. When we feel that folks have turned from us, they do not any longer share our sympathy or share our ideas or our objectives, and we feel like we have been left alone. Well, these things all bring a sense of loneliness.

Now, loneliness we often think of as almost the same thing as aloneness. But they are not the same thing. Aloneness would be being alone.

But loneliness is feeling alone. It's the emotional problem, not the actual problem. And you can be lonely when you're not alone.

You can be lonely in a crowd of people. You can be lonely among your friends. You can be lonely with folk all around you.

On the other hand, you may be delivered from loneliness just by one person coming into your presence. The relief of loneliness has nothing to do with the number of people that are around. The relief of loneliness has to do with our relation to a person.

And I want to go through the word with you tonight, as we have on other evenings, and look at some people who have been lonely and see what their experience has been and what the Lord might want to say to us out of their experience. Now, you may think that I'm overdoing the Elijah bit on this series lately. We've spoken of Elijah several times, and yet Elijah was a man who knew what loneliness was.

So I want you to turn to 1 Kings, chapter 19. Elijah was by nature a loner. He worked best alone.

His work was largely done alone. But this didn't spare him from a sense of loneliness. Look at the 9th verse of the 19th of 1 Kings.

And Elijah came thither unto a cave, and lodged there. And, behold, the word of the Lord came to him. And he said unto him, What doest thou hear, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts.

For the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword. And I, even I only, am left. And they seek my life to take it away.

Only I am left. This is the wail of a lonely heart. Nobody else but me.

Now, in this particular situation, Elijah had fled for safety after a great experience with the Lord. And Elijah was just feeling so sorry for himself that he was not seeking God in this experience. He was too busy feeling sorry for Elijah.

And this is possible to happen to any of us. In our circumstances, and especially when we've had a mountaintop experience and we're in the backwash of that experience, we can get the feeling, poor me, and get away from the idea of seeking the presence of the Lord. And one of the things I think we should be encouraged by in this situation is that the Lord didn't leave him alone just because he felt alone.

And because he wasn't seeking the Lord, the Lord came to him. Now, this is a great thing. But in our loneliness, God, who understands us, comes to us and reveals himself to us.

And he may do for us as he did for Elijah. And that is, he may straighten out our ideas about himself and about the way he works with us and with other people when he comes to us in our loneliness. Elijah had a new revelation of God in this experience.

Now I want you to look at another man or another people who were lonely, and that's in the story in Deuteronomy 31. Here the situation is that Moses is about to leave the children of Israel. For 40 years he has been the leader.

Forty years, this is quite a while. They had gotten so that they depended upon Moses for everything. Whenever there was anything wrong, they went to Moses about it.

He was their man. And now Moses is to be taken from them. Deuteronomy 31, verse 1. And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel, and he said unto them, I am 120 years old this day.

I can no more go out and come in. Also the Lord hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan. The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them.

And Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the Lord hath said. And the Lord shall do unto them as he did to Sion and to Od, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them whom he destroyed. And the Lord shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you.

Be strong and of a good courage. Fear not, nor be afraid of them. For the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee.

He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage. For thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them, and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee. He will be with thee. He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee.

Fear not, neither be dismayed." That's a great word. You know, Moses is now to leave them, and all the hearts of the people would have failed at this word. What will we do without Moses? Moses has been our man before God.

How will we get along without him? And Moses reminds them, the Lord, he it is that will go with you. He will not leave thee. What a great thing.

What a great word to this lonely people. And if the people as a whole felt the loss of Moses, just imagine how Joshua felt. Joshua was Moses' servant, and for 40 years Joshua had been deputy to Moses, and he had done what Moses wanted done, and he had looked to Moses for instructions about everything, time and again in the story.

Joshua asked him this, Joshua said that, Joshua said the other thing, and Moses always told him what to do and how to do it. Oh, now he's going to be gone. And Joshua's heart must have just sunk within.

What will we do without Moses? And so Moses brings Joshua before the company, especially because he knew how Joshua felt. And he said, Joshua, I want to tell you something. The Lord will not leave thee.

He will be with thee. Carry on. That was the word to these lonely people.

He will not leave thee. There was another man that had a terrible experience of loneliness, and his story is given to us in the book of Judges. Judges chapter 16 is where we will look at the story.

And this man is Samson. Now, a great deal could be said about Samson. We're just going to focus in on this particular instance in his life.

I would remind you of what is said in the 20th verse of the 15th chapter, and that is that Samson judged Israel in the days of the Philistines 20 years. Sometimes we get so occupied with the story about Samson and his dallying around that we forget that for 20 years he was God's man in Israel. He was the judge of the nation.

But here's one of the things about which the Lord has spoken to me from time to time, and I'm sure to many of you, and that is this was a mature man. He judged Israel for 20 years. That meant he was over 50, and that's when he got in trouble.

Not just a young fellow. No, here was a man you could expect better things of, and he got in trouble. And it says down in verse 4 of chapter 16, It came to pass afterward that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah.

Now, there's nothing wrong with loving a woman. I hope, and if there is, I'm in deep trouble. But it wasn't right for him to love Delilah.

Delilah was a Philistine. And when it says here that he loved this woman in the Valley of Sorek, it means that he was deliberately going out of the will of God. Now, we know that he had been doing this.

He'd been playing around with people down in Philistia and had been making friends of them, and he just had lost his sense of the significance of his being separated unto God. Anyway, he fell in love with this woman because he was down there. And they say, you know, that if you don't want to buy the devil's goods, you shouldn't shop in his store.

Well, that's what Samson was doing. He was shopping in the devil's store, as it were. He was out among the Philistine people, making friends among them.

And not to be wondered at that he fell in love with one of them. You know the story. She was false to him.

She found the secret of his strength. She cut off his hair. And the enemy came in and they took Samson.

And he served as a slave, grinding corn in the mill. They put out his eye. I think the best statement I know of about Samson's situation comes out of a poem that Robert Browning wrote called Samson Agonistes.

It's a great poem. It's one of the great poems of the English language. And in this poem, Browning tells us what was on the heart of Samson as he ground at the mill.

You remember before Samson was born, how the angel came to Manoah, his father, and Manoah's wife and told them about this son they were going to have and that he was going to be really something special and God was going to deliver Israel by this son. And oh, how their hearts were lifted up. And Samson came.

And he delivered Israel. And he was a judge in Israel for 20 years. But then came the sad decline.

And now he's grinding corn, bound with brass fetters, walking around and around as he turns the millstone. Listen to him. Oh, why was my birth from heaven foretold twice by an angel who, at least in sight of both my parents, all in flame ascended from off the altar where an offering burned? Why was my breeding ordered and prescribed as if a person separate to God, designed for great exploit? If I must die betrayed, captive, and both my eyes put out, made of my enemies the scorn, the gaze to grind and braze and fetters under cast with this heaven-gifted strength? Oh, here's a man who was alone.

He was in the prison. We read earlier of him at the time that the Philistines took him and that he wished not that the Spirit of God had departed from him. Because that happened, he was alone.

And oh, the depths of his agony as he was there grinding for the Philistines. Now go to verse 28 of this 16th chapter. And Samson called unto the Lord and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me.

I pray thee only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines.

And he bowed himself with all his might, and the house fell upon the Lord and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life. He called on the Lord to remember him.

You see, he remembered the Lord. He knew where the trouble was. Samson's loneliness came from disobedience.

And it is possible in our experience to turn into our own way and to go the way we want to go apart from the Lord. And by his wonderful grace, God will give us an awful experience of loneliness. And then, through his discipline, he will bring us to the place that he brought Samson, where we remember and we call upon his name again.

And again, he can come in with blessings for our lives about how much we've missed. Here's a warning for us that loneliness can grow out of disobedience. David was another man who understood what it was to be alone.

Let's turn to the 37th Psalm. Here the emphasis is not so much upon the aloneness, it's upon the answer for it. David had a lot of experiences.

He had known the presence of God. He had known a sense of loneliness in his life when his family and his sons had deserted him and all. But listen to what he says here.

Verse 25. I have been young, and now am old. Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

Verse 28. For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints. They are preserved forever, but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

He forsaketh not his saints. Isn't this a great thing to know, that it doesn't matter how deep our sense of loneliness may be, we have the word of God, his promise made sure to us, he will not forsake us. If we aren't alone, it means that we have lost the sense of his presence.

It doesn't mean that we aren't alone, because he has promised never to leave us, never to forsake us. I want us to look at a word given to Israel in the message of Isaiah, chapter 41. These are words with which we are all acquainted.

41. Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God.

I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee. Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Now over to chapter 43.

But now saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.

And through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned. Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee, for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior.

I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee. Therefore will I give men for thee and people for thy life.

Fear not, for I am with thee. I will bring thy seed from the east and gather thee from the west. I will say to the north, give up, and to the south, keep not back.

Bring my sons from far and my daughters from the ends of the earth, every one that is called by my name, for I have created him for my glory. I have formed him, yea, I have made him. And the particular phrase I want to take out of this last several verses is, I have formed thee, I have created him for my glory.

You see, there's more involved in this than just the fact that the Lord loves us, and he does love us, and he will not leave us nor forsake us because he loves us. But there's more involved than that. It isn't just the way he feels about us, it is his glory that is involved.

He has saved us for a purpose, and he is going to accomplish that purpose. He hasn't left us. He hasn't forgotten his purpose in us, however much we may feel that he has.

Now turn to John 14, verse 18. The Lord Jesus is talking to his disciples, and he says to them, I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you. I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.

Verse 26. The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again unto you. If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father, and my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

I will not leave you comfortless. And this word comes down to you and me from the Lord Jesus. Now, when he left, he gave us something to do, and that reminds us again of the way it was with Elijah.

You remember that when Elijah was feeling so lonesome there in the cave, that the Lord said to him, Now get back to work. I've got lots for you to do. And he said, Your work has not been without results.

And he shared with him something of the results of the work he had been doing. And for us, this is good. In our loneliness, to have work and to have fellowship.

But work and fellowship is not enough. It's easy for us to say, if people are lonely, that they should get to be busy. And this is good.

This is good therapy. And it is good for them to get out among people and to have fellowship. This is great.

But it is not enough. What is an absolute necessity for loneliness is the personal presence of God. And this doesn't just happen.

This is something that we have some responsibility in. That is to say, we must be available to God. He is there.

He is with us. He has promised to be with us. And we can act as though he didn't exist at all.

And if we do, we'll continue in our loneliness. But if we remember that he is there and we share with him, then we're on the way out. Now, there was another man who was lonely, and this is not the last, but the next to the last one we'll consider.

And that was the Apostle Paul. Turn to 2 Timothy, chapter 4. You know how Paul worked and how he labored for the Lord, and how he shared with all of those who would work with him. Now, he is writing his second letter to Timothy.

He is near the end of the way. He is a prisoner in Rome. His execution is going to be the next thing to transpire.

But he is alone there, and he writes this in verse 9. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me, for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica, Crescent to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.' Here is Paul in Rome, a prisoner, and he is lonesome, and everybody has gone.

He goes on to say in verse 16, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me.

All men forsook me, notwithstanding the Lord stood with me." Now, it made all the difference. It made all the difference. Men may forsake us.

Our circumstances may change. But one thing we may be sure of, and that is that the Lord is not going to forsake us. He will stay with us in this situation.

Now, there is one other that I want to consider, and that is the person in the word of God who knew more about loneliness than anybody else ever knew in world history, and that is the Lord Jesus. Nobody knows about loneliness as he did. Turn to Psalm 22, and hear the Spirit of God through his servant.

He has written something about the loneliness he knows about. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not. And in the night season, and am not silent, but thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee and were delivered, they trusted in thee and were not confounded. But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

All they that see me laugh me to scorn. They shoot out their lips, they shake their heads, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him. Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

But thou art he that took me out of the womb. Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breast. I was cast upon thee from the womb.

Thou art my God from my mother's belly. Be not far from me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help me. Here is the ultimate loneliness, the loneliness that was experienced by our Lord Jesus.

I submit this to you, that it doesn't matter how lonely we may feel, we have one who will come in and be with us, who knows all about it. He has felt, but he has felt it more intensely than ever you or I could experience. He is ready to minister to us in our loneliness.

We shouldn't leave the 22nd Psalm here. Let's turn to verse 22 of the 22nd Psalm. It says, I will declare thy name unto my brethren.

In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him all. Ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him and fear him, all the seed of Israel, for he has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted.

Neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard. We know that other statement about the Lord Jesus being heard in that he feared. He cried to the Lord with strong crying and tears, and he was heard in that he feared.

God is able to do this. No matter how great our loneliness may be, he is able to come into that experience and bring us to the place where in the midst of the congregation we shall sing praise unto his name. And we may be very grateful that this is so.

As I say, this is a problem that affects us all at one time or another time in our experience. It can come about from many different causes. It can be brought about by bereavement.

It can be brought about by a change of our environment. It can be brought about by rejection. We can go into it through disobedience.

Or like the Lord Jesus, we may even know loneliness because of our obedience. That's why he was lonely, because he was obedient. But no matter what his source may be, we have a Savior who knows all about loneliness and is able to share totally with us in this experience.

And the solution for it in us is to recognize his presence and to fellowship with him as he ministers to us. God help us to do this. This is a hard problem.

It's an emotional problem that not only affects all of us, but it affects all of us deeper. Thank God for a word like we have here. He knows about it and ministers to us.

We thank thee, our Heavenly Father, that thou hast assured us that thou knowest the heart and the ring. You know what goes on in our minds and in our hearts. You know all about our emotional problems and our mental problems and our physical problems.

And you know about them because you have self-discipline. We thank you for this. We pray thee that thou would minister thy word to our hearts here.

And for those who may be in special need, we pray that they may hear the sound of thy voice, have a sense of thy presence, that sense of thy presence that can override, that can possess us, and make us to praise thy name. So help us all, we pray thee, to hold these things fast in our hearts so that when the time of loneliness may come, we will not be alone, but we will be able to appropriate thy presence, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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