

You ARE Alone

Commentary for August 18, 2013 — ... Alone with God, when You Die

No matter how close we are to other people, no matter how much we love or are loved, in a sense we are alone at the beginning and end of our lives. We are born alone, even though we do not realize there are others around us. After we are born, those who care for our every need and most of our wants are largely unknown to us. Over the weeks, our senses focus and we begin to recognize individuals and their features.¹

Likewise, we die alone. No one can die "with" us, even when others die next to us. Death is an individual process, sometimes rapid and sometimes not so quick. It is a solitary process, even when we are blessed to have others around us giving comfort at the time of death.

"Though God has set us in a wonderful scheme of human relations, we have an individual life that cannot be touched by man. We are individually responsible to God. This individuality sets man, as it were, in a solitude. He lives alone; he suffers alone; he dies alone. If he has pain in his body, no sympathy of friends can destroy it; it is still his pain. Our friends may soothe our dying moments by their prayers and their words of affection; but still we die alone. Thus every man carries alone, and apart from other men, his own burden of responsibility, or of frailty, or of sorrow."

• *Spence-Jones, Galatians, p. 319*²

King Solomon summarizes our approaching death. It applied to him; it applies to you.

"Just as to all, there is one destiny ... This is the evil in all that is done under the sun: That one destiny is for all; Moreover the heart of the sons of humanity is full of evil, And ravings are in their heart throughout their lives, Yet after it, they are joined to the dead. Indeed for anyone who is joined with all the living there is trust; For it is better to be a living cur than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die, But the dead know nothing whatsoever; There is no further reward for them [while they are dead]; indeed remembrance of them is forgotten.

Both their love and their hate as well as their jealousy have perished already, And there is no further portion for them for the eon in all that is done under the sun. Go, eat your bread with rejoicing, and drink your wine with good heart, ..."

• *Ecclesiastes 9:2–7, Concordant Literal Translation*

"Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him. For he knows not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be? There is no man that has power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither has he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it."

• *Ecclesiastes 8:6–8*

¹ Infants gain a progressive recognition of primary caregivers in the first weeks of life, and begin to respond to different individual features of face, voice, scent, and touch of the caregivers.

² H.D.M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Galatians*, The Pulpit Commentary (London: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 319.

Moses died alone (Deuteronomy 31:14–16, 32:48–52, 34:4–7), yet God took him. Moses died, and God buried him on or near Mount Nebo. His death was probably “easy,” however you interpret that concept. King Hezekiah was told when he was going to die, but God extended his life for fifteen years (2 Kings 20:5–6; Isaiah 38:5). When Daniel’s three friends were cast into the fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar, they were not alone, as an aide told the king: **“Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God”** (Daniel 3:25). Though they expected God would let them die, they did not die then.

When Daniel was put in the den of lions, he appeared to be alone. Yet Daniel was not alone. An angel from God was with him. **“My God has sent his angel, and has shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me ...”** (Daniel 6:22). Daniel did not die at that time, but those who accused Daniel did die — along with their wives and children (verse 24). They each died alone, one at a time. Such was the harsh brutality of the times.

Did Christ Die Alone?

Jesus was never alone (John 8:16, 29) until He was crucified:

“Behold, the hour comes, yea, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”

• ***John 16:32***

Jesus told His disciples they would abandon Him. He would have to face His end alone.

“Behold, the hour comes, yea, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”

• ***John 16:32***

No disciples were present at the crucifixion other than the disciple Jesus loved, who most scholars think was the apostle John (John 19:26). The women were stronger. At His death were **“his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene”** (John 19:25). Then, just moments before His death something even more traumatic happened to Him. Jesus experienced, just before the moment of His death, what David prophesied:

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is to say, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”

• ***Matthew 27:46***

This verse and its slightly different companion of Mark 15:34 both quote King David from Psalm 22:1. At that moment, Jesus was alone. He knew the verse well, but on top of His terror, horror, pain, and anguish, He experienced what each of us will experience at death — including the fear of approaching death.

“For we have not a Chief Priest not able to sympathize with our infirmities, but One Who has been tried in all respects like us, apart from sin.”

• ***Hebrews 4:15, Concordant Literal Version***

Remember, this was the Creator who died, **“the beginning of the creation of God”** (Revelation 3:14), and God **“created all things by Jesus Christ”** (Ephesians 3:9). Jesus was:

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, ... all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

• **Colossians 1:15–17**

Jesus died. Everything was created by God the Father, YHWH, through Jesus. Christ, the Word of God (John 1:1–3), the first creation and creator, died!

Jesus’ death was unique. He was dying for your sins — and mine, and for everyone’s sins. He became sin. God rejected sin and abandoned His only-begotten Son at the moment of His death — temporarily.³ Lewis Foster has a different perspective:

“Jesus would die alone, but His heavenly Father would not desert Him. Even His words, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Matthew 27:46) would not mean desertion, but only agonizing separation for the moment. After that cry, Jesus would still speak to the Father and commit His Spirit into the Father’s loving hands (Luke 23:46).”

• **Foster, John: Unlocking the Scriptures, p. 181**⁴

I believe Lewis Foster is mistaken on one point. The Father did desert Jesus because He was sin. He did not simply “represent” sin symbolically — He became sin for all mankind:

“For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

• **2 Corinthians 5:21 (with Romans 8:3)**

Jesus being made **“to be sin for us”** refers to the sacrifice of the Mosaic sin offering. The sins of Israel figuratively were placed on the sacrifice by the acts of the priest. However, the actions of the chief priest were symbolic of the reality of our sins actually put on Jesus.

Furthermore, Jesus was also the Lamb of God. He was the Passover (**“Christ our passover is sacrificed for us,”** 1 Corinthians 5:7) by which God’s punishment for our sins passes by us, as John the Baptist said: **“Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29).

Fear of Death

Only rarely does God grant people the privilege of knowing they are not alone at the moment of death, even though He knows when our death will be, as we are told in the Book of Job:

“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down: he flees also as a shadow, and continues not. ...

³ Study Matthew 20:28, 26:28; John 3:16–17; Galatians 1:4; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 5:7–8, 10:10; 1 John 2:2; 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18; Revelation 1:5. These passages will give you a quick education about the role of Jesus Christ in salvation.

⁴ Lewis Foster, *John: Unlocking the Scriptures for You*, Standard Bible Studies (Cincinnati, OH: Standard, 1987), 181.

Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with you, you have appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. ...

If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

• *Job 14:1-2, 5, 14*

"Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?"

• *Job 7:1*

"In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind."

• *Job 12:10*

We always feel alone at the moment of death. Being unconscious at that moment would be a blessing. Even so, God has left believers an opportunity to have some peace even at death.

"His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in YHWH his God."

• *Psalms 146:4-5*

"Peace I leave with you, MY peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

• *John 14:27*

"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep [those who have died], that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep [die] in Jesus will God bring with him."

• *1 Thessalonians 4:13-14*

"For none of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."

• *Romans 14:7-9*

When death approaches — even without people around you — although you seem to be alone, yet in truth you are alone with God and in His care, even if you do not realize it.⁵ After all, you are a child of God and He is providing and caring for you. We will be surprised how much our Father has been involved in our lives (Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9).

As a believer, you will very likely die before Jesus returns, but you will never die again. And, after your resurrection you will never feel alone (Psalm 23:4).

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⁵ Regarding angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14). It is likely, therefore, we are never truly alone. We think we are alone, yet there is a great amount of activity invisibly going on around us. Somehow angels are care-takers of us, like nannies to infants, although this is likely a poor analogy. What they do to serve or minister to us, we cannot know at this time. God charges some of His angels with folly (Job 4:18). The apostle Paul wrote that we shall judge angels, but this future judgment is less important than how we treat each other today (1 Corinthians 6:1-3).