

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, December 11, 2013 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

FAITH TO ENDURE IN TIMES LIKE THESE

Living with Loneliness

2 Timothy 4:9-22

“⁹Do your best to come to me quickly, ¹⁰for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. ¹²I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. ¹³When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments. ¹⁴Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. ¹⁵You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. ¹⁶At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen. ¹⁹Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. ²¹Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters. ²²The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all.” – 2 Timothy 4:9-22 (NIV)

In Times Like These

By Ruth Caye Jones

In times like these you need a Savior, In times like these you need an anchor;
Be very sure, be very sure Your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!

This Rock is Jesus, Yes, He's the One; This Rock is Jesus, the only One!
Be very sure, be very sure Your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!

We are living in tough times, and it doesn't take a lot of discernment to know that. We began our study on "Faith to Endure in Times Like These" a few weeks ago by look at the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. He tells us in no uncertain times that "difficult times" are upon us. How does the Christian cope? What are the techniques that spur us on and keep us stable... help us to endure in times like these? This study has centered on such questions. Last

time we talked about not getting discouraged and weary in the struggle to live out the faith in times like these, and finishing well. Paul's word in 2 Timothy 4:6-8 provided us with the needed instruction for finishing the task.

Loneliness has been called "the most desolate word in the human language." Under the heavy weight it hangs on the heart, anguish reaches its deepest levels. Strangely, activity and a faster pace doesn't help much to lighten that weight. Neither does travel. A lonely soul is not comforted by new surroundings. Many a person in our rapid-fire, fast-moving times is virtually immobilized by bleak and desolate feelings that accompany loneliness. In that damp, dark dungeon the Apostle Paul wrestled with such feelings. His timely and final words linger to this day, offering wise and needed counsel in impersonal and difficult times like these.

I. **WHEN LONELINESS STRIKES (2 Timothy 4:9-21)**

The emotion is not known only by those without God: loneliness strikes the godly as well... both the weak and the strong. It respects no one. In the Hebrew 11 listing of the experiences of courageous men and women, we find that they were people who all felt deep loneliness at times (Heb. 11:36-39).

"³⁶ Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— ³⁸ the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground ³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised." – Hebrews 11:36-39 (NIV)

They were mocked, scourged, chained, imprisoned, stoned, and killed; they went about destitute, afflicted, mistreated; they wandered about living in caves and holes of the ground. They knew penetrating loneliness. Paul did as well. In his most autobiographical statement... the 2 Corinthians letter... he named personal experiences that pulsed with loneliness (2 Cor. 11:24-28).

"²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." – 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 (NIV)

However, the most eloquent of Paul's own writings on the subject of loneliness were penned in his final days of life and recorded in his second letter to Timothy. From his words we find at least four times when loneliness strikes. What is true of Paul's experience is also true of ours.

4 Times When Loneliness Strikes:

1. **When we are distant from cherished friends (vv. 10-12, 19-20)** – Notice verses 10-12 and verses 19-20, *“¹⁰for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. ¹²I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.”* And in verses 19-20, *“¹⁹Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.”* Ones to whom he had been close were now gone for varying reasons: Demas, compromising his faith, deserted Him; Crescens had gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia; Priscilla and Aquilla were engaged in their own ministry; Erastus was in Corinth; Trophimus was sick in Miletus. Except for Luke, those on whom he had depended for love and support were scattered. He needed at that moment cherished, intimate friends.
2. **When our memories bring nostalgic reminders (vv. 16-17)** – Notice verses 16-17, *“¹⁶At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth.”* Paul was reviewing his yesteryears, thinking of the times that were. He thought back to his first defense when he discovered himself alone and unsupported. He remembered the way God stood with him and provided him strength to preach. The sights, sounds, and smells of another day were fresh in his thinking.
3. **When certain times of the year occur (vv. 9, 21)** – Look at verse 9 again, *“⁹Do your best to come to me quickly...* and again in verse 21, *“²¹Do your best to get here before winter...”* Winter was coming... it was on its way. The change of the season could be felt down below in the stony, dark dungeon of the Mamertine Prison. He implored Timothy, “Make every effort to come to me soon... before winter.”
4. **When we feel forgotten and shelved** – This is especially true for those who have once known the joys and rewards of service... involvement... usefulness, having been in the mainstream of ministry as Paul had been, only to be snatched away suddenly or removed gradually.

What effects can loneliness have on the life of a believer. The following are some of the ensuing results that can come upon a life at the hand of this powerful and overwhelming cloud of loneliness.

4 Results of Loneliness on the Life of a Believer:

1. **Forsaken (v.9)** –
2. **Fearful (vv.14-15)** –
3. **Angry (v.14)** –
4. **Abandoned (v.16)** -

II. WHAT LONELINESS DOES

We move from a bleak picture to one that is brighter. Loneliness does not have to be a wasted moment for us. From loneliness can arise at least two positive results.

2 Positives that Can Grow from Loneliness:

1. **It makes us aware of others' significance (v.11)** – Notice verse 11, *“¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.”* The apostle may have never appreciated Dr. Luke so much as he did in the dungeon. Luke was the only one with him... one who could assist his physical needs. Paul even viewed John Mark in a different light. In Acts 15:36-40 we find that he had little respect for this one he considered a deserter. As a matter of fact, Paul and his associate, Barnabas, split up because of the negative feelings Paul had about John Mark. Now, in his final days, he saw Mark's value.
2. **It forces us to turn our concerns over to God** – Even though he had been wronged by Alexander the coppersmith, he left that matter with God, Who would repay his opponent according to his deeds (v.14). Even though he could have worried over the circumstances holding him in confinement, he focused on the Lord's ability to deliver him and His capability to keep him safe (v.18).

III. HOW LONELINESS IS CONTROLLED

None of us are immune to loneliness. When it wraps itself about us, we cannot simply cast it aside. The question is not, “How do I get rid of it?”... you probably don't... not really... it's an emotion that comes and goes... a deep seeded emotion that can have various catalyst for its presence in a life. The question is instead, “How can I handle it now that it's present?”

4 Ways To Help Control Loneliness and It's Effects:

1. **By investing time with intimate friends or developing friendships –**
2. **By taking care of bodily needs –**
3. **By stretching the mind on good books –**
4. **By spending time in the Scriptures -**

IV. WHY LONELINESS REMAINS UNCHECKED

Many overcome by this emotion merely lick their wounds and mop their tears, saying, “Poor me... no one ever had it so hard.” We've all been there. You are not more immune to loneliness in the days ahead than you were in those already gone by. But we must come to terms with the opportunity loneliness presents to us. It's a perfect time to say, “Lord, I've exhausted all my alternatives; now it's just You. Make of me the man or woman You had in mind all along, and I'll go on from here.” He will do just that!