

WHEN YOU FEEL LONELY, REMEMBER OTHERS Who Have Felt The Same Way and Josh 1, I Kings 19, and Acts 23
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WHO FELT THE SAME WAY AND JOSHUA 1:5;
1 KINGS 19:10; ACTS 23:11

The feeling of loneliness can be a depressing experience. It is possible to feel lonely in a crowd, to see innumerable faces, none of which can be recognized. A few people choose to become hermits; others confine themselves to religious institutions believing that in solitude peace be found. Yet the fact remains that most people love the company of other human beings, and consequently, when circumstances isolate them, despondency is never far away. A boy away at school, a member of the armed services separated from family, a young missionary in a foreign land, and even travelers whose occupation demands sacrifice-all can be frustrated by loneliness. The Bible has a special message for such people.

The Man Who Was lonely in a Crowd (Joshua 1:5)

Poor Joshua! When God said, "Moses my servant is dead," an ominous chill was felt throughout Israel, but no man was more affected than the new leader who was asked to succeed the revered patriarch. His task was unenviable for circumstances would often separate him from the most important people in the nation. Critics would shatter his tranquility, insurmountable obstacles would challenge his ingenuity, and a sense of inadequacy would undermine his confidence. Even the Lord recognized the weight of the burden to be carried, and with great wisdom said, "As I was with Moses so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Although many problems arose to confront and confuse Israel's leader, Joshua knew he could never be alone again. He welcomed solitude, for in the stillness, it was easier to hear the voice of his Master.

The Man Who Was lonely in a Cave (1 Kings 19:10)

Poor Elijah! He who had been hunted by men was now haunted by memories. He had stood triumphantly before a multitude but had been frightened by a sinful woman. Jezebel had ruined his ministry and threatened to end his life. At the height of his career Elijah failed to do his duty, and as he hid in a mountain cave, probably wished he were dead. Had it been possible for Elijah and Jonah to meet, they could have talked long into the night. The reluctant messenger to Nineveh would have appreciated the feelings of his

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older brother. Jonah felt desperately alone when he said, "Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die, than to live" (Jonah 4:3).

When a healthy man loses the desire to live, it is generally because of failure and disappointment within his life. The person who continually thinks about disasters, disorders and defeats has no time to consider the promises of God. Elijah listened to the voices of nature and remained unmoved; when he was still, a whisper from the Lord stirred his soul and he realized he was not alone.

The Man Who Was lonely in a Cell (Acts 23:11)

Poor Paul! Two years in a prison cell would be sufficient to sadden the heart of any man, but for Paul the time was heart-breaking. He had traversed continents and preached to multitudes of people. He sighed when he remembered those exhilarating meetings. But everything had changed, and Paul was desperately alone. He had few friends and preached only to his guards. His imprisonment had been occasioned by an intense desire to attend a festival at Jerusalem. God warned him to stay away from the feast but unfortu-

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nately the apostle's enthusiasm ran away with his reason! Luke's statement was self-explanatory: "And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem" (Acts 21:4). Paul disregarded that command, and when it was too late to change his attitude, he was alone with accusing memories. The two years of incarceration might have been used proclaiming the Gospel of Christ

Then a wonderful thing happened. "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou hear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11). Paul's disobedience did not indicate God had forsaken him. Much work still had to be accomplished. The prisoner's spirit was liberated even before his prison door opened. The Lord visited Joshua, Elijah and Paul.

Are you alone in a crowd, a cave, or a cell? Look carefully around. God is nearer than you can imagine.

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