

## **THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM** **(2 Timothy 4:9-18)**

### **1. The reality of loneliness.**

- a. As we stated, loneliness is real and it is no respecter of persons.
  - i. The Christian and non-Christian are affected by it.
  - ii. Those who are soldiers of the cross and those far from the Lord can and have all been struck by it.
- b. Loneliness is not being alone, because there is a big difference in being alone and being lonely.
  - i. Our Lord would often go out alone and pray but He was not lonely until He got to the cross.
  - ii. Being alone can be a good thing and is necessary at times in order to pray and meditate on God's word.
- c. Thoreau wrote that a city is a place where hundreds of people are lonely together.
- d. The truth is that loneliness is very destructive.
  - i. In a Psychology Today article about loneliness there was this statement: "There is no more destructive influence on physical and mental health than the isolation of you from me, and of us from them."
  - ii. There are physical consequences:
    - (1) One survey stated that more than 50% of heart patients admitted they were lonely and depressed before their attack.
    - (2) Research also shows a relationship between loneliness and certain types of cancer.
  - iii. There are emotional consequences:
    - (1) One study showed that 80% of psychiatric patients interviewed said they sought help because of their loneliness.
    - (2) Around half a million people attempt suicide each year in the US and many of those attempts are linked to loneliness.
  - iv. There are also spiritual consequences because loneliness keeps us from having the fellowship with God and one another that is so spiritually healthy.
- e. Dr. Paul Tournier wrote "Loneliness is the most devastating malady of this age."
- f. But it is not new to this age.
  - i. Elijah experienced it (1 Kings 19:10).
    - (1) He was despondent because of his situation.
    - (2) It may be that you've lost a loved one to death or divorce.
    - (3) Maybe old age has snuck up on you and left you feeling unnoticed or unloved.
  - ii. David experienced it before that (Psalm 102:4-7; 142:4).
  - iii. Paul had to feel lonely when he said all had forsaken him (2 Timothy 4:16).
    - (1) It may be that you feel alone in this congregation.
    - (2) You may feel alone in your marriage.
    - (3) It's possible to feel you are alone in standing for God.

### **2. Reasons for loneliness.**

- a. This is a subject that has been studied for many years by experts in different fields.
- b. Numerous reasons are given for it and we will notice three.
- c. Loneliness can be caused by society.
  - i. We live in an alarmingly impersonal society.
  - ii. To the bank you are an account number not a name.
  - iii. To the store you are a credit card not a person.
  - iv. We have casual contacts and very few deep friendships, if any.
  - v. Many have their faces buried in some type of device.
    - (1) This is not limited to young people either.
    - (2) Often, in going out to eat, I see whole families each buried in his or her device.
    - (3) Tell about mom going to the doctor's office filled full of older people.
  - vi. How many people are there to whom you are truly close?
  - vii. The great thing about God is that He is personal.
    - (1) The very hairs of our head are numbered (Matthew 10:30).
    - (2) While man may know our number, God knows us (John 10:14).
- d. Loneliness can be caused by service.
  - i. Harry Truman, while president, said, "To be President of the USA is to be lonely, very lonely, at times of great decision."
  - ii. Moses experienced this (Numbers 11:10-15).
  - iii. Service to God's people and others is not easy, but demanding.
  - iv. Christian service can rob you of your time, energy, and patience.
  - v. It can and will make you a target, envy, and blame.
  - vi. Yet, it is the greatest privilege on earth to be God's tool to bring about change in the lives of others.
  - vii. It is the greatest privilege on earth to be able to preach and teach God's word and help God's people.
  - viii. Paul, though lonely at times, said, "Woe is unto me if I don't preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16).
- e. Loneliness can be caused by suffering.
  - i. Job probably suffered more than any other person besides our Lord.
  - ii. He was lonely (Job 19:14), yet he never lost his faith in God.
  - iii. Jesus can relate to the feeling of "no one cares for me" (John 1:12).
  - iv. He was rejected by His own nation and even members of His own family.
  - v. He was alone and lonely on the cross, feeling forsaken even by His Father.
  - vi. He knows how you and I feel (Hebrews 4:15).

### **3. Resources for battling loneliness.**

- a. Remember the purpose of God in front of you.
  - i. God told Elijah... (1 Kings 19:15) - God was not finished with the work He wanted Elijah to accomplish.
  - ii. The lonely brother or sister in Christ needs to remember God needs you working in His kingdom.
  - iii. What did Paul tell Timothy (2 Timothy 4:13)?
  - iv. Get back in the book because that will allow you to get back with it.

Author.

v. You will find passages to help you like:

(1) Psalm 27:10;

(2) Hebrews 13:5.

vi. God's cure for your loneliness is to get back into His word and get back into His work.

b. Remember the people of God around you.

i. When loneliness happens we are tempted to draw away and turn inward even though we desire people in our lives.

ii. Elijah was lonely because he thought he was the only one living for God but was informed God had 7,000 like-minded people.

iii. Paul called for Timothy to come with him and to bring John Mark and to get there before winter (2 Timothy 4:11, 21).

(1) Some will say, all I need is the Lord.

(2) Paul knew he needed the Lord but wanted his close brethren with him as well.

iv. Look for that stranger that visits the services or the person who sits on the other side of the auditorium to whom you haven't really spoken.

v. Don't wait to be befriended, go and befriend someone else.

c. Remember the presence of God with you.

i. God reminded Elijah that He was with him (1 Kings 19:11-12).

ii. Paul felt left alone by others but knew God was with Him (2 Timothy 4:16-17).

iii. God is right there with us in the midst of our loneliness (Hebrews 13:5).

This is not my original outline but do not know the source of it.