

Alone But Not Alone

By: Keith Keyser

“Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” John 16:32

Abandonment and loneliness are among the most dreaded human experiences. No one wants to be alone in a time of crisis. Whether it is a neighbor, a relative, or just a good friend, human hearts crave companionship in the midst of difficulties. This innate impulse was not absent from the Lord Jesus, who is “God manifest in the flesh,” yet also a perfect man (1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:5.)

On the night before Christ’s crucifixion, His disciples were perplexed and troubled about His repeated statements that He was about to leave them (e.g. Jn. 14:2; Jn. 16:16.) Their fears focused on their personal situation, not so much on what He would endure. What would life be like without Jesus around to guide and protect them? Given that they had left their old lives to follow Him, this sort of talk naturally disturbed them (Matt. 19:27.) Yet the real horror of the coming day would be experienced by the Master, not His followers. His abandonment by the disciples would merely be the beginning of sorrows for the Suffering Servant (Isa. 53:3.)

In The Hands Of The Rabble

Even when the well-armed mob converged upon Gethsemane to arrest the Lord, the unarmed Savior demonstrated His protecting power by orchestrating the release of His eleven loyal followers. Without threatening or invoking angelic aid, He authoritatively said “Let these go their way”; accordingly the captors permitted the disciples to depart unharmed. This seemed counterproductive to their purposes: why not wipe out Jesus’ closest lieutenants with one blow? Yet in their hatred against the Lord, they were blinded to reason, and obeyed His sovereign wishes.

By the end of His arrest, the disciples all rapidly dispersed. Peter and John returned to follow Christ afar off to Caiaphas’ palace. The tragedy of their physical distance was augmented by Peter’s threefold denial of His Master, which the Lord had predicted (Lk. 22:31-34, 60-62.) While it is true that the Lord also prophesied this disgraced disciple’s restoration, it does not diminish the fact that this departure helped fulfill the Old Testament prophesy concerning Christ: “Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none” (Psa. 69:20.)

The Harmonious Working Of Father And Son

In spite of this lack of human comforters, the Lord Jesus pointed out to them that He was actually not alone (Jn. 16:32.) Throughout His life on earth, the Father audibly manifested His presence with His only begotten Son (e.g. Matt. 3:17; Mk. 9:7; Jn. 12:28.) Now in view of Mount Moriah – like the ancient patriarch Abraham and his beloved son – the phrase “the two of them went together” described the Divine Father and Son’s approach to Calvary (Gen. 22:6.) The cross was a work of the triune Godhead: God the Father was the righteous judge, the Son was the Lamb offered up through “the eternal Spirit” (Isa. 53:6; Heb. 9:14.) Though the Son was judged as a sin offering at the cross, He remained the uniquely well-pleasing one to His Father. The comfort of their relationship was only

displaced by the wrath of God falling upon Him (Matt. 27:46.) He remained the Son of God's love throughout His sufferings. His great pain is captured by the imagery of Messianic Psalms like the 22nd and the 69th: "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death" (Psa. 22:14-15) and

Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary with my crying; My throat is dry; My eyes fail while I wait for my God. Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; They are mighty who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully; Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it...Let not the floodwater overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut its mouth on me. (Psa. 69:1-4, 15.)

The eloquent hymn writer, James G. Deck evocatively pictured the scene in poetry:

*Oh solemn hour! that hour alone
In solitary might,
When God the Father's only Son,
As man for sinners to atone,
Expires --- amazing sight!
The Lord of glory crucified!
The Prince of life has bled and died!*

*O mystery of mysteries!
Of life and death the tree;
Centre of two eternities,
Which look, with rapt, adoring eyes,
Onward and back to Thee.
O cross of Christ, where all His pain
And death is our eternal gain.*

*Oh, how our inmost hearts do move
While gazing on that cross!
The death of the Incarnate Love!
What shame, what grief, what joy we prove,
That He should die for us!
Our hearts were broken by that cry,
'Eli, lama sabachthani?'*

*Worthy of death, O God, we were;
Thy judgment was our due;
In grace Thy spotless Lamb did bear
Himself our sins and guilt and shame;
Justice our surety slew,
With Him our surety we have died,
With Him we there were crucified.ⁱ*

The Father's Opinion Of His Son On Display To The Universe

Christ was not irrevocably forsaken, however; instead, the Father demonstrated His pleasure in Him by raising Him from the dead three days later. As Peter later said:

Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'...This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. 'For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.' Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:24-28, 32-36.)

Other passages confirm that the Father demonstrated His appreciation of His Son by the resurrection (Acts 3:13-15; Rom. 1:4.)

Head Of An Innumerable Company

The stricken One was vindicated by the Father and received into glory, where He never shall be alone (1 Pet. 3:22.)

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!' And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: 'Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!' Then the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever (Rev. 5:11-14.)

For all eternity, the redeemed will praise and fellowship with the Lord of glory, who was judged for sin on the cross, and subsequently glorified through resurrection from the dead. For the future ages upon ages the Father and He will be the center of attention (Eph. 1:20-23; Rev. 21:22-24.)

iJ.G. Deck, "Oh Solemn Hour, That Hour Alone"; <http://www.stempublishing.com/hymns/ss/215>