

# On Being Forsaken (Part 1)

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Recorded on March 10, 2018

What I'd like to share with you today is perhaps a bit of a departure style-wise from how I usually approach a topic. I feel it has its inspiration articulated in the 131st Psalm. If you would turn there with me to Psalm 131. We're going to read all three verses from the New Living Translation. For what it's worth—this Psalm is traditionally read (and I didn't know this until recently), between the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, and there's a Hebrew phrase for it (I don't remember what it is), but it's the weekly Sabbath before the Passover—in terms of context, in terms of time, kind of appropriate, if you will.

**Psalm 131:1** *[A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. A psalm of David.]*  
*LORD, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I don't concern myself with matters too great or too awesome for me to grasp.*

*2) Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself, like a weaned child who no longer cries for it's mother's milk. Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me.*

*3) O Israel, put your hope in the LORD—now and always. (NLT)*

Today I'd like to focus on the spirit of what we read in verse 1 of Psalm 131. We will take a more contemplative approach to a topic that is vital for us, in turn, we find ourselves moving into the condition that David describes in verse 2—this calming and quieting of oneself. What David commands in verse 3 is vital to realizing what we read in verse 2. All of these pieces will come together as we move forward today.

What we're going to share today, as we read in verse 1 of Psalm 131, it's not too great nor awesome for us to grasp, as a matter of fact quite the opposite. It is perhaps very familiar to us—very close to our heart and our minds. It is quite the opposite; it is pervasive in society, as well, sadly in the church. If anything, it will drive any pride and self-aggrandizement out of our minds—let's dive in. Turn with me to 1 Kings 19. We'll start in verse 1 and read through the first part of this chapter in fits and spurts. We're familiar with the story, but to summarize up to Chapter 19 of 1 Kings: we have the prophet Elijah who has participated in (to put it in modern vernacular), the ultimate deities smackdown. You've got Elijah and the prophets of Baal, and they're there to settle once and for all who is the true God in a miraculous demonstration of the true God's power and a bit of Elijah's own dramatic flair. If you look back at Chapter 18 of 1 Kings in verse 27, I'll read from the Contemporary English Version—I find this humorous.

**1 Kings 18:27** ... *Elijah began making fun of them. "Pray louder!" he said. "Baal must be a god. Maybe he's day dreaming or using the toilet or traveling somewhere. Or maybe he's asleep and you have to wake him up."* (CEV)

Elijah was having fun poking at the prophets of Baal and in the end, Elijah defeats these prophets by single-handedly killing them all. Then he informs King Ahab of Israel that this epic drought that had been impacting the country was about to come to an end and was given the supernatural strength and endurance to run the nearly 20 miles distance from where this showdown took place on Mt. Carmel (to Jezreel). He did that all in front of Ahab's chariot. So, you have all this drama, this excitement, power, and energy. Then you get to Chapter 19 of 1 Kings, let's pick up this story again in verse 1.

**1 Kings 19:1** *Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.*

2) *Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."*

3) *And [we see Elijah's reaction] he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.*

Let's skip down to verse 8.

8) *So he arose and ate and drank [again this is Elijah], and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.*

9) *Then he came there to a cave and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (NASB)*

Verse 10 is where I want to focus. This is Elijah's response:

10) *He said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of Hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your Covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." (NASB)*

Let's stop and assess what we have—all the drama, all the excitement, the power that was demonstrated in everything that had taken place up to this point, certainly the emotional and spiritual high experienced in this event. You have this individual, Elijah, and he's right at the center in all of this, so you can only imagine the impact it must have had on him. Then the right words from the right person—all that energy into enthusiasm and power fades to the background. The perspective changes with equally dramatic force, right. You have Elijah from being unstoppable—this guy is on fire, to what? He's hiding out in a cave, we read that in verse 9. He comes to a full stop, a very dramatic change.

Let's consider this maybe in the context of our own personal experiences. I know I've always found this entire account in 1 Kings of what transpires with Elijah to be one of the more interesting accounts in all of the Bible. It really shows us very dramatically the

power of God in action. While at the same time, juxtaposing with how insidious our human shortcomings can be. Let's ask ourselves have we had an experience—have you had an experience in your life where you've been perhaps riding high (if you will), on a success in life? Perhaps even more apro to our account here in a spiritual sense, right. Maybe you've made some significant strides in overcoming a weakness or a sin, or you feel that your relationship with God or Christ is really strong; your prayer life is good and things seem to be going well—that connection is really strong only to come crashing down in an adversely equal low. Akin to this account—again Elijah—perhaps a word, a comment or a reaction from someone that hits just right—that chink in our armor (if you will). We go from being enthusiastic and positive to feeling like the whole world is crashing down on us. Again, zeroing in specifically on Elijah's example, have you ever been in a situation in which you felt your zealousness for the LORD—as Elijah puts it here—has left you alone perhaps more than alone, but the focus of unwanted attention. We're going to spend more time exploring that concept as we go along today.

To put Elijah's words perhaps in a more familiar context maybe you've said in words akin to this: "I'm committed to you LORD. I've been striving to overcome, to be a light, to stand up for what I believe, to stand up for the truth and no one seems to care. I feel so alone—I feel forsaken." Brethren, what I'd like to share with you today is not an easy topic. It's one that each of us—I think in our own individual experiences can relate to. It's a topic that I'm recording—this message here for you today (we're a little less than three weeks away from Passover 2018), it's a topic worth reflecting on as we undertake thinking very deeply about the work here on earth, and the sacrifice of our Savior Jesus Christ, and what His efforts mean to us—personally. Starting with Elijah, I'd like to continue to explore with you today what it means to be forsaken.

Before we go any further, it may behoove us to establish some clarity around what exactly this word "forsaken" means. I know for me personally, I don't use the word forsaken in my everyday vocabulary, so let's take a couple minutes to talk about that. The dictionary defines the word "forsaken" to be *abandoned or deserted*—it's straightforward. There are some synonymous phrases that may add a little bit of depth to what this means. Some of these phrases include: to lead high and dry, to turn one's back on, to cast aside, to break up. As teenagers, girlfriends, boyfriends, you hear that breakup phrase used. This one is interesting "to wash one's hands of." I actually read this yesterday and thought it fit very neatly here. It's a classic, relevant example from the Bible of this concept of washing one's hands of. I'll read it to you—you can jot it down Matthew 27:24. I'm going to read it from the Amplified Bible. We're familiar with this story, but it's Christ before Pilot.

**Matthew 27:24** *So when Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere (so, he's with the crowds and they're shouting crucify him, crucify him and Pilot's trying to say look this guy's innocent) but rather that a riot was about to break out, he took water and washed his hands in the presence of the crowd, saying, (notice this) I*

*am not guilty of nor responsible for this righteous man's blood; see to it yourselves. (AB)*

It's ironic that Pilot says this because of what we read in John 19:10. Pilot tells Christ, hey, I have the power to kill you, I have the power to let you live. He did have the authority, at least in his mind (now Christ sets him straight in His response), to exercise justice for this individual. Surrendering to the will of the mob, Pilot did actually make a conscious choice here, and that was to disavow—to forsake an innocent man. The most innocent man who ever lived. We're going to come back to Christ's account towards the end but let's go back to this word forsaken. What I find telling is that (and you can go online and you can look a word up, and you can find these charts that will show you in literature or in media how often the word is used over time), looking at the word forsaken, there has been a significant uptick in this word being used in our literature over the past ten years after decades of a decline. "Okay, Tom what does that mean"? While our focus together today is going to be biblically based—I think it's telling because society, in general, appears to be increasingly cognizant of what we read in 2 Timothy 3:3 and 4. You can jot that down, you don't need to turn to it if you don't want to. I'm going to read it from the Amplified Bible and focus on the areas where this concept of being forsaken is articulated. As we know from verse 1 of 2 Timothy 3, the context is the last days. I think we can all agree we are in the midst of that.

**2 Timothy 3:3** *They will be without natural human affection callous and inhuman [again, thinking about this concept of turning ones back on or casting aside] relentless [notice this] admitting of no truth or appeasement. (AB)*

I thought that was really interesting when we think about this in the context of being forsaken. No room for reconciliation, no room for discussion just walking away turning your back. Reading on ...

*3 continued) ... they will be slanderers [false accusers, troublemakers], intemperate and loose in morals and conduct, uncontrolled and fierce, haters of good.*

*4) They will be treacherous, betrayers, [again, thinking about disavowing, casting aside, betraying, again synonyms for forsaken] rash and inflated with self-conceit. They will be lovers of sensual pleasures and vain amusements more than and rather than lovers of God. (AB)*

Biblically the words translated as "forsake" or "forsaken" have the same general meaning as they do in the English, so we're not going to spend any time going through Greek and Hebrew in that respect, rather I'd like to continue to explore a few more prominent biblical accounts of examples of individuals expressing or experiencing being forsaken and take the time to slowly digest these accounts and consider them perhaps in the context of our own experiences. I've got a couple of personal experiences to share with you today maybe where we can relate—where we connect. Then we will use

these accounts as a basis for discussing what we do with this. How do we cope? How do we respond? At this particular point in time, God willing, I'm planning a Part 2 of this concept of being forsaken.

Let's go back to the count of Elijah before we move forward here. Another interesting point we can draw out from his account, and this will come up as well in the second one. When confronted with the news that Jezebel wanted him dead, what was Elijah's reaction? How did he respond to that? I can say this with tongue in cheek, as if running in front of Ahab's chariot for 20 miles wasn't enough running—we read in verse 3 of 1 Kings 19 that he ran for his life. Then later he's on the run again to Horab. When in the midst of strife, tension, fracturing of relationships and suffering from separation have you ever wanted to run away from it all? Have you ever felt so utterly desperate or under duress that escape seemed to be the safest path?

Science describes a concept in living things. This concept of (I'm sure you're familiar with it), fight or flight. When a living thing is under stress they generally respond in one of those two ways. When being rejected, when being cast aside, when being forsaken, it's hard to muster up a fight, isn't it? Perhaps because you feel embarrassed or ashamed or humiliated in that process. Hold on to this thought we're going to revisit it in just a moment. To put a cap on Elijah—what can we take away? What can we see about this concept of being forsaken in the context of Elijah's account here? While God's working wonders through us as individuals (and that's a very powerful and empowering experience), we are ultimately responsible for what goes on inside our heads which translates into actions. This is going to be the key to discussing again, how we respond, how we cope with this idea of being forsaken. There's good news here and that good news is this aspect of our circumstance is something that we have 100 percent complete control over. That might be good news, that might be terrifying news. We have the control, we have the power, and this is vital, we have the help. We're going to see that as we go along being a willing vessel of God's work in action that it is invigorating and can be empowering and also can be a very lonely road. We will see as we go along this is a well-established and a well-identified pattern for those on the Christian walk being a willing vessel of God's work in action. It is invigorating and can be empowering, and it can be a very positive experience, but it can also bring us negative attention, and it can bring us persecution. I know I've always thought of this concept of being forsaken is to be abandoned but fully realize it can actually be a lot more than that, and it can be much worse than that. We're going to continue to explore that in more detail as we go along today.

We skipped parts of the story and stopped reading the account before it was done, and we're going to come back to Elijah when we talk about the concept of coping, or what do we do when we're in this situation or circumstance of being forsaken. Now let's continue to our next example. Turn with me to Psalm 55. We'll start in verse 1. Similar situation—we're going to go through this in fits and spurts, stop and talk about some different things and skip around a few verses.

**Psalm 55:1** *For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David.*  
[So, David is going to be our second account here] *Give ear to my prayer, O God; And do not hide Yourself from my supplication.*

2) *Give heed to me and answer me; I am restless in my complaint [notice this] and am surely distracted, (NASB)*

I'm reading all of my verses today from the New American Standard edition of the Bible—it's my default translation. The New American translates the end of verse 2 as, "and am surely distracted" depending on the translation; your Bible may not do the same thing. I want to take a moment to sit on this thought in the context of being forsaken in the shattering of relationships. There are few things that are more distracting, and few things that make as much clamor or make as much noise in our lives as going through this process. Think about your own experiences and relationships that may have come and gone this way in your life, and how much time, how much mental effort, how much energy went into the process. Thinking about all the things that were said or thinking about all the things that weren't said or the things that were done or the things that weren't done in going through this process. Perhaps you have letters, perhaps you have emails and you read them and you reread them, and you're trying to gauge tone or read between the lines of what's being said, what's not being said. The sleepless nights because of your processing and processing and processing this circumstance. Perhaps the circumstance is being the topic of nearly every conversation that you have with anyone that's willing to listen. You're trying to work through this, you're trying to make sense, you're trying to find reason into why—what's transpiring is transpiring. Perhaps literally as the end of verse 2 of Psalm 55 is translated in the New King James Version—we moan noisily to anyone that will listen—the difficulty in concentrating on anything else in life. Truly going through this process is noisy, it's clamorous, it's distracting. Reading on in Psalm 55:3.

**Psalm 55:3** *Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the pressure of the wicked; For they bring down trouble upon me And in anger they bear a grudge against me.*

4) *My heart is in anguish within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.*

5) *Fear and trembling come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me. (NASB)*

We're going to focus on verses 6 and 7 here. These are going to be the keys:

6) *I said, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.*

7) *"Behold, I would wander far away, I would lodge in the wilderness, Selah." (NASB)*

Let's indeed, "Selah" here for a moment. We read these verses—it sounds a bit like Elijah doesn't it. The desire to be removed from the situation of the circumstance—this

desire for peace. In the context of Psalm 55, penned by David long after his years as a shepherd for his father's sheep, long removed from the days and nights, as he puts it lodging in the wilderness. A bit of personal connection with me as I read these words in verses 6 and 7. I think back in my life too many years ago when I was younger, footloose, fancy-free, as I like to say. I was young and my heart was fluffy spending many summer weekends hiking and backpacking all around the Pacific Northwest—wonderful, wonderful times! There was a particular summer I spent a few days backpacking with a very good friend of mine in the Olympic National Park through some of the most absolutely stunning, natural beauty that I've ever seen and have seen to date—the crystal-clear lakes, brisk cool streams—hiking around the north face of Mount Olympus. We don't hear a lot about Mount Olympus in terms of mountains in North America or the United States, but it is truly spectacular—truly spectacular observing nature unspoiled. And for me personally, it was the first time I ever saw a bear in the wild outside of a zoo or on TV. We were hiking along and came down the trail, and there was a bear right in front of us, nose deep in a berry bush. I was like, oh hey check it out, there's a bear, isn't that cool! Let's get a closer look! My buddy was like, there's a bear, we're going that way—didn't want to have anything to do with it at all. As we were coming to the end of our trip, my buddy and I mused about how spectacular it was, how truly wonderful it was, and how much we were not looking forward to rejoining society. We dreamed about what it would be like to take our driver's license, and our passports, our calendars, our bills, our phones and gather them up and throw them in the campfire and keep hiking spending our time wandering in the wilderness and being at rest—ditching the clamor, the noise, the strife, the conflicts of modern life.

Back to Psalm 55, skip down to verse 12. We're going to spend some special time here and focus on verses 12 through 14.

***Psalm 55:12*** *For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, Then I could bear it; Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted against me, Then I could hide myself from him.*

*13) But it is you, a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend;*

*14) We who had sweet fellowship together walked in the House of God in the throng. (NASB)*

We didn't focus on it in the context of Elijah, but Elijah too shared a similar expression that we read—didn't he. This idea of being alone amongst the entire nation of Israel, amongst those that should have known better. Those as Elijah puts it, forsook Your Covenant. David's expression takes this isolation really to the next level though. It's not just a group of people or a group of your own people, but it's being discarded, being forsaken by none other than a companion, a familiar friend. What might this relationship look like—this companion, this familiar friend? The word, "companion" here in the King James Version of the Bible is also translated throughout the Old Testament as *captain, duke, friend, guide*, (and I thought this one was interesting) *ox or oxen*. This is an individual that is more than an acquaintance, it's more than a coworker or a next-door

neighbor. This is someone that you have come to take their counsel to heart. This is someone who is looked up to. This is someone who has a significant influence on your life; this is an ox in your life. What does that mean? This is someone whose sturdy, reliable, a resilient force, hardworking, dependable through thick and thin, maybe you thought a familiar friend. This is someone who is known intimately. The Bible in Basic English translates this as, *my well-loved friend*, and I like that translation. The Hebrew word used here is translated very broadly and used a lot throughout the Old Testament nearly 1000 times. It's the same word used in Genesis 4:1 to describe the relationship between Adam and Eve that resulted in the birth of Caan, if you follow my logic there. Not just a coworker, not just a community member, this is someone who is very, very close to you.

Let's reflect on verse 14 for a moment. We're going to revisit this concept shortly in our next example, but let's personalize this because I think all of us to a greater or lesser extent can. How many over the decades have we lost sweet fellowship with? How many in your life can you recall attending Sabbath services with or going to the Feast of Tabernacles with or any of the Holy Days for that matter? Personalizing this—one of my more vivid memories as a kid growing up in the church was attending our assigned Feast of Tabernacles site in Tucson, Arizona, and in going to that site we would at the very least be with many of the people that we knew and saw every Sabbath from our local congregation. There would be years several of us families would caravan the six to eight hour drive to Tucson, and it was an adventure. Us kids, we just loved it, it was great! We'd swap between cars, or we'd have walkie-talkies or CB's and we'd talk back and forth to each other. We'd always be on the lookout for the green stickers driving down the road—and they'd always send the green bumper stickers for parking before the Feast—so, we'd be on the lookout for those green stickers, "hey there's a green sticker" as we're traveling down the highway and we'd wave to them as we saw them. We'd chatter about all the places we get to see, all the adventures we'd have, all the time we get to spend in the swimming pool or all the fun cool restaurants we'd get to go to. We had this money—this second tithe; we had all this money that we would buy stuff that only kids can really appreciate at the end of the day. These were people we saw every Sabbath; we saw these people every Holy Day, and we shared together in the coming to the knowledge of God's truth over meals at one another's homes late into the night. As kids, the longer the grownups chattered it was more time we got to play and that was awesome! So, we really relished those times. In many cases, lives deeply intertwined, some starting businesses together, marriages came together, and we all shared in the triumphs and the tragedies that defined our lives. Aside from my family, quite literally my mother and father—all of those people that we shared those experiences with are gone; they are out of my life. All of those years going, "in the throng" as David puts it here in Psalm 55—nothing more than memories. Does that sound familiar to you? I'm guessing you may have an experience or experiences very similar to this. I'm sure I'm not alone. Frankly, my story might be a bit bittersweet—really only captures an aspect of what David is expressing here at best. It's traditionally held that Psalm 55 was written of Ahithophel, David's counselor, and we know that from



1 Chronicles 27:33; who betrayed David along with David's own son Absalom to overthrow him and take control of the kingdom. This was again someone close, someone trusted and considered a pillar. We know from 2 Samuel 16:23; we're told that Ahithophel's advice was as if one was inquiring to the word of God, Himself. This individual deserting, leaving, abandoning, forsaking David.

Our next account adds another dimension for us to consider when thinking about what it means to be forsaken. We're adding layers to this concept as we explore these accounts. Turn with me to 2 Timothy 4. We're going to read verses 10 through 16. What we have here is the end of Paul's life and some of his final instructions to his son in the faith, Timothy—as we're recounting what he experienced in his current situation and circumstance which isn't necessarily great, as we're going to see here.

**2 Timothy 4:10** *for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.*  
(NASB)

I want to stop here. I read verse 10, and I can see some parallels to our times here. Have you ever sat down with someone in the church or with somebody you've just met in the church and had a conversation that sounds a bit like this, "Yeah, I remember Bob, yeah, where did he ever end up? Oh, you know what, he's over in United now. Yeah, he moved across the country and he's with United, and he used to be best buddies with Jim, but he and Jim had a falling out. So, Jim's now with COGWA. He won't have anything to do with Bob or with United at all. You remember Betty? Yeah, Betty! You want to know what happened to her? You'll never believe this, she's a Buddhist now, can you imagine? Amazing!" I'm sure you've probably had conversations very similar, I know I have. Back in 2 Timothy, let's pick this up in verse 11.

**11)** *Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.* (NASB)

Skip down to verse 14.

**14)** *Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.*  
**15)** *Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.*  
(NASB)

Verse 16 is my focus here.

**16)** *At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me ...* (NASB)

Paul who tirelessly served God's people at a tremendous personal expense and in the end, what do we read here in verse 16? We read he is deserted and no one's

supporting him—left very much alone. We're here in 2 Timothy turn back just a few pages in your Bible to Chapter 1, and we'll read the first part of verse 15. It's kind of a capstone to this concept because this isn't the only time he mentions this in 2 Timothy.

**2 Timothy 1:15** *You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me ... (NASB)*

Abandoned by those not only as part of the church should have been the most supportive but abandoned at a time in Paul's life of tremendous need—a time when things for Paul were hard. They weren't necessarily easy at any point in time, but they were certainly hard at this point being imprisoned for the faith, awaiting trial by the Roman government—surely, the years and the mileage, if you will, on Paul had taken its toll. I'm sure Luke's presence as mentioned in verse 11 of Chapter 4, the “beloved physician”, probably was very greatly appreciated. Now going back to David for a moment. I can't help thinking of the words we're going to read next in the context of Paul, and where he found himself in this particular letter. Turn back to Psalm 31, please. We're going to read verses 9 through 12. We're going to overlay this on Paul's experience that we read in 2 Timothy.

**Psalm 31:9** *Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; My eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body also.*

*10) For my life is spent with sorrow And my years with sighing; My strength has failed because of my iniquity, And my body has wasted away. (NASB)*

The New Living Translation translates verse 10 this way:

*10) I am dying from grief; my years are shortened by sadness. Sin has drained my strength; I am wasting away from within. (NLT)*

Most translations add the word, “my” before the word iniquity or the word sin depending on the translation, but they put the word, “my” in there. In context (I'll couch this as my personal opinion), adding that word doesn't seem to make a lot of sense. Sin as a general concept or iniquity, perversity, depravity—as the Hebrew word can be translated—has its effect and consequences on the one that's the victim—with the wearing and the tearing physically, emotionally, spiritually. Why do I call this out? What's the point? In context it fits more neatly, and we see this in verse 11. Let's read Psalm 31:11.

**Psalm 31:11** *Because of all my adversaries [David's not saying because of my sin: sin because of my adversaries], I have become a reproach, Especially to my neighbors, And an object of dread to my acquaintances; Those who see me in the street flee from me. (NASB)*

Going back to Paul that's our source here. You think Paul might have felt like this? Remember the concept of mileage. Soul and body being beaten down and wasted

away with only Luke to attend to those needs, and being forsaken by those who are his spiritual neighbors. Perhaps due in part of the circumstance, Paul found himself in made him a reproach to those individuals—an object of shame, “I don’t want to have anything to do with him because he’s in prison; he’s in trouble with the government.” Reading in Psalm 31:12.

12) *I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind; I am like a broken vessel.*  
(NASB)

Thinking about what it means to be forsaken—our topic today—being cast aside, much like one would with a broken plate or a broken cup. Maybe you repair it, maybe you don’t, generally you throw them away, you cast them aside without a whole lot of thought—reflecting back on the spirit of what we read here in verse 11. While a few or probably none of us have ever been in the exact type of situation that Paul experienced. There’s a prevailing notion throughout the modern iteration of the Church of God that if someone is not being actively blessed or is going through hard times or is going through a trial—again looking at Paul’s experience—hey, he’s in trouble with the government. Then, therefore, they’re doing something wrong, and that means God is punishing them. Very black and white, very linear thinking. We’re quick to pull out the “you got to judge them by their fruits.” Then pivot to, “Okay, well don’t cast your pearls before swine” or “blessed is the man that doesn’t keep company with sinners” or any number of what has become scriptural clichés to excuse ourselves, to separate ourselves from that particular individual; the ones being punished for their crimes, their sins—with little effort to understand, with little effort to reconcile the situation. I’m going to ask brethren have you ever been on the receiving end of that? This can be painfully insidious, as often times that individual’s being shunned—as the word we’ve used in the past—has no idea why. They’re being forsaken, they’re being disavowed, they’re being cast aside at a time in their lives when, perhaps they could use the most help, and not be cast aside. I’ll ask this—I’ll challenge all of us to this: if sin is indeed the problem, the cause of the trouble are we not instructed to reach out and help? Isn’t that what we are told in James 5:19 and 20. Something to think about! Sadly in a way, this is a best-case scenario. What about the situation of the truth, standing up for what is right or in the next account we’re going through—being the very essence of right is a catalyst for being forsaken. Experiencing this rejection, this desertion and having to face it front and center, very literally, before your very eyes. Brethren, being forsaken and exploring this topic of being forsaken would not be complete without talking about the one who experienced this in ways. That we’re going to explore but frankly will never be able to fully grasp or be able to completely understand. We can take the time to reflect, to meditate and deeply internalize what took place and what it means, and what it affords to us. So, let’s do that and turn with me to John 6. We’re going to read verses 56 through 67. We’re dropping to the end of Christ’s discourse with the Jews as to their questioning who He was—they’re questioning His authority. Interestingly enough, if you look back in context at verse 26 of John, Chapter 6—countering what amounted to the people looking for a freebie, a handout, what’s easy, what’s immediate, what’s satisfying in the here and the

now, and not for the food which endures to eternal life as Christ counters in verse 27 of John, Chapter 6.

**John 6:56** [We read Christ's words here] *He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.*

*57) As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me.*

*58) This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.*

*59) These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. (NASB)*

Let's stop and reflect on these words for a moment. We're going to reflect on them in the context in which they're being spoken. Most of us who've been in the church for any length of time, we can sit down, we can read these words, and we can understand their meaning. We believe them at least intellectually, and we understand the power of the message that Christ is speaking here. I don't think we necessarily appreciate the fact of the context, and the mind of the Jews He's talking to—you've got this guy named Jesus and He's telling them something on the surface that makes absolutely no sense, whatsoever. To any man on the street, if you were to say this to that individual, they would think you're nuts, they would think you're insane! Notice the response here in John 6:60:

**John 6:60** *Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" (NASB)*

This reaction and response were from who? It was from His disciples—it's interesting to note that. Notice how this verse is rendered from the Amplified Bible, verse 60 of John 6:

**John 6:60** *When His disciples heard this, many of them said, This is a hard and difficult and strange saying [notice this] an offensive and unbearable message. Who can stand to hear it? Who can be expected to listen to such teaching? (AB)*

This wasn't, "we don't get it", this was, "we have a real problem with what you're saying here, and we are offended, we don't like this". Notice verse 61, John 6:

*61) But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?" (NASB)*

Christ noticed this: He noticed the tone, He noticed the response—it was not positive from His disciples.

*62) "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?"*

63) *“It is the Spirit [which] gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.” (NASB)*

As we mentioned earlier, Christ here is offering the pathway, He’s offering His life and His upcoming death as a pathway to true eternal life. This is truth—Christ is truth personified. We see here what the truth is bringing about, and it’s not a positive reaction.

64) *“But there are some of you who do not believe.” [notice this] For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. (NAS)*

The last part of verse 64 is a sneak peek into where we’re going to go in Part 2. Christ knew this was coming—He knew what was going to happen. We’re going to see that didn’t keep the impact of the situation and circumstance from being very real to Him. Reading on verse 65:

65) *And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.” (NASB)*

Verse 65, we have another sneak peek into what we’re going to talk about next time, and that is the Father is in full control. Nothing happens without Him being at the very, very least aware if not directly involved in orchestrating what’s going on. How we react, how we respond, and how that impacts us is our choice; those are decisions that we have complete control over. We read in verse 66 choices being made:

66) *As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. (NASB)*

Verse 66 of the Contemporary English Version of the Bible reads this way:

66) *Because of what Jesus said, many of His disciples turned their backs on Him [notice it’s one of those synonymous phrases for being forsaken] and stopped following Him. (CEV)*

Reading on in verse 67:

67) *So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” (NASB)*

In context, the day before—if you go back to verse 10 of John 6, there were 5000 men, and it’s more likely there were more people if we’re not counting women and children. These 5000 scarcely let Christ have a moments peace. We read in verse 15 that Christ had to break away, make a run for it, so He could have some time alone. By the time

we get to verse 67 of Chapter 6, how many do we have—twelve? How many turn their backs? How many stopped believing? How many stopped following? We don't have the details of the tone or posture of what we read in verse 67 of Christ's question to those that remained, but I personally would imagine at least some level of emotional impact on His part. Why would I say that? Because the Father and the Son desire that all men be saved. We know that from 1 Timothy 2:4 and knowing that—knowing that's the objective, that's the goal—that's why They're going through this exercise in the first place. How hard it must have been to see right before His eyes this falling away. This rejection as He's offering Himself and His life, His body for them. Knowing ahead of time doesn't necessarily make the experience any less real when it's front and center right before your very eyes. Christ being forsaken, as a concept, it doesn't end here, does it. Mark 14 we'll read verses 48 through 50. This is Christ's betrayal, and the mob has come to get Him.

**Mark 14:48** *And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as you would against a robber?"*

49) *"Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but this has taken place to fulfill the scriptures."* (NASB)

Christ knew—He knew what was going to happen, but that didn't make the situation any less real for Him. Notice verse 50, this is the focus:

50) *And they all left Him and fled.* (NASB)

They all left Him: the healings, the miracles, the compassion, the providence, the service—no matter where, no matter when—the expression of love and word and deed, in the washing of feet, the sharing of the bread and wine that had just been done! Fresh in mind, fresh in memory that last Passover. That intimate setting had just taken place—there were twelve. We get to verse 50. Now left alone but it does get much worse. Chapter 15 in the book of Mark we'll read verses 24 through 34.

**Mark 15:24** *And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take.*

25) *It was the third hour when they crucified Him.*

26) *The inscription of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS."*

27) *They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left.*

28) *[And the scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."]*

Notice verse 29:

29) *Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,*  
30) *save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"*

- 31) *In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself."*  
32) *"Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him. (NASB)*

Now the situation has tipped all the way from being alone—remember mentioning this concept of being forsaken as being by yourself, but this is taking it from that idea of being alone to being surrounded by hate, surrounded by persecution, surrounded by mockery. This takes being forsaken from the result of an action to a proactive activity. This is actively disavowing, this is actively discarding, actively renouncing, actively casting aside—all of those is what forsaken can mean. Not forsaken by nameless, faceless random people—they are very clearly identified here. These are people that Christ came to serve, likely many He recognized, likely many He spent time with, probably had personal conversations with—being rejected, at the least, by those He created—the product. The desire of the Word and the Father to hear a God-plane existence in a family relationship of those He crafted and all of this being rejected and forsaken—culminating in what we read in verse 33:

- 33) *When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour.*  
34) *At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" which is translated, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" (NASB)*

Psalm 22 we'll start in verse 1.

- Psalm 22:1** *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Far from My deliverance are the words of My groaning.*  
2) *O My God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; And by night, but I have no rest. (NASB)*

Skip down to verse 6.

- 6) *But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people.*  
7) *All who see Me sneer at Me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,*  
8) *"Commit Yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver Him; Let Him rescue Him, because He delights in Him." (NAS)*

Skip down to verse 12.

- 12) *Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me.*

- 13) *They open wide their mouth at Me, As a ravening and a roaring lion.*  
14) *I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of My joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within Me.*  
15) *My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue cleaves to My jaws; And you lay Me in the dust of death.*  
16) *For dogs have surrounded Me; A band of evildoers has encompassed Me; They pierced My hands and My feet.*  
17) *I can count all My bones. They look, they stare at Me;*  
18) *They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.*  
(NASB)

As we're moving closer to the Passover this year 2018, these are words we're reflecting on. The example that we have of Jesus Christ encompasses all that we've talked about today. The idea of being zealous for God, leading to being alone, to being persecuted, to being abandoned by those closest to you if it be individuals of a close relationship, that familiar friend, a companion, or those you simply have served—all the way to the opposite end of the spectrum—the relationship spectrum. To put it in a vernacular, to kick a man while he's down. In the case of Jesus here, the willingness of the Father, the Almighty God, the One who has complete and final authority over all of creation to look away from the only other Being in creation that was His companion, that was His familiar friend. A relationship that we as mere clay can't even begin to fathom the depth of that connection. Yes, we have Christ enduring the cross, absolutely, but we must not forget the reality of what the Father did as well. What I'm about to share with you—tying in personal experience or a personal relating point here—by no means meant to trivialize the gravity of what we just covered, but as a human being, fraught with weakness, stubbornness, ingratitude, impatience—all those wonderful characteristics that tend to make us as human beings. I as a husband and a father can take my family for granted. I work from home at least forty percent of the time, and I spend most of my weekends at home. When I do go into the office for work, I'm pretty much at home every night for dinner, and I rarely travel overnight on business anymore, so I'm a homebody. I'm in the presence of my wife and daughters consistently and often constantly, and I think it's important, and I think it's a tremendous blessing. I know for our family that hasn't always been the case, so I do treasure that, but I am also an introvert and at times that closeness of proximity can be a little claustrophobic. Specifically, I'm going to pick on my poor wife—I give her a hard time. Touch—touch for her is one of the most important expressions of love and means of expressing love that she has—for me personally, it's not so much. I kid her—go into our bedroom look at our bed, and you look at the ratio of how much of that bed is actually used—it's about twenty percent. Over the course of a night I'll be subconsciously moving over to try and give her more room, when in actuality she just wants to cuddle. She's just trying to get closer, and I'm getting further away. There have been times where I've gone to roll over and there's nowhere else to roll over to except off the bed onto the floor. When I have had occasions to travel for business—I get to the hotel, and my first thought is, yes, I'm going to have this big old bed, all to myself. I'm going to be able to spread out and



relax, and it's going to be great, but you know what—I get to the hotel, I get into the room and I see that bed and flop down on it, and it's great and I relish that moment, but then it hits me—I'm all alone. Some of those nights in the hotel rooms on the road have been some of the worst night's sleep I have had in my married life, not having my wife beside me. In a subtle but powerful way it makes me thankful for my family and thankful that I get to see them pretty much every day, and we can share our lives together, and share love with one another on a very continual basis. In my mind, I try to accelerate this reaction to the God-plane. The idea that God the Father could be alone for three days and three nights—sure surrounded by the heavenly hosts and the twenty-four elders and the angelic realm, so it's not like He was alone-alone—but I'm at that hotel, on the road and I'm not alone. I'm not the only person in the hotel, but I'm very much alone in that room. God the Father without the one Being that He had spent eternity with and companionship shared by none other. In some very small trivial way—I will venture in a ridiculous way—I try to relate in the context of my closest relationship with my wife, but I can't—I honestly can't. What these God Beings did for us, enduring being abandoned, deserted, having backs turned, being forsaken. Brethren, I'd like to stop at this point today as we're moving rapidly towards the Passover, reflecting on what Christ endured, what the Father endured, and for what purpose—I feel this is a good place for us to be. It's powerful and should actually be encouraging and empowering but at the same time it's also sobering perhaps in ways that pale in comparison. We each in some small part relate to what it means to be cast aside—to be alone, to feel all have abandoned us, to even feel perhaps God, Himself has abandoned us. It's important to stop and reflect on this reality and consider deeply the impact that it has on us internally, and subsequently this is the key: to consider very carefully our thoughts, our actions and our reactions, and how they impact those around us. In each of these accounts I intentionally left sections out that we will, God willing, cover next time I have opportunity to share time with you—now that we've identified and spent time considering what it means to be forsaken. Next time we'll take a look at what we can glean from these accounts—married (along) with other related sections of scripture in answering the questions: “Okay, so now what” or “how am I supposed to cope if I find myself in this situation”? We're going to specifically divide what we find into two broad categories: what we know, and what we can do. We will explore thoughts on how to cope, and how to move forward when relationships all around you are crumbling.