

Left Hanging

Description

35After they had nailed him to the cross, the soldiers gambled for his clothes by casting lots. A few late manuscripts add

This fulfilled the word of the prophet: "They divided my garments among themselves. See Ps 22:18. 36Then they sat around and kept guard as he hung there. 37A sign for the
criminals;

also in 27:44. were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

39The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. 40"Look

41The leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders also mock

The Death of Jesus

45At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. 46At about

"Eli, Eli, 27:46a Some manuscripts read Eloi, Eloi. lema sabachthani?"

which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" 27:46b Ps 22:1.

47Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prop

And another took a spear and pierced his side, and out flowed water and blood.

Compare John 19:34. 50Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spiri

Matthew 27:35-50 NLT

What do you do when you feel that God has left you hanging? When you feel that you've done everything he asked/told you to do but you still end up losing, disappointed, shamed before your enemies, or abandoned by him? Jesus had prayed to his Father (God) on 3 separate occasions in Gethsemane and received the same answer (Matthew 26:36-46): that he must die on the cross and there was no alternative. After the beatings, humiliation, abandonment by friends, and disrespect by those who didn't even know him, he was placed on the cross, where he spent several hours in agony, exposed, and again humiliated before the people, but this time something deeper happened, something that hurt much worse; he felt abandoned by God. Not just abandoned by God, but abandoned by his father at this moment, the same father who 3yrs earlier voiced his pleasure in him before the people as he arose from his baptism in the Jordan, the same father who sent angels to nourish and attend to him after he successfully withstood the devil's temptations in the wilderness, the same father who scolded Peter, James, and John on the mountain of transfiguration for speaking foolishly as they were witnessing heaven and Earth interacting (Matthew 17:1-13), and protected him from mobs and pharisees/saducees who wished to kill him because they were jealous of his authority (Luke 4:14-30 & Matthew 21). The same father who had been with him in all of these situations, and countless other times when he retreated alone to pray for strength and direction, was now "abandoning" him when he needed him most. What do you do when God leaves you hanging? Jesus here is physically, mentally, and emotionally broken as he hangs on the cross, he's been betrayed by a disciple (Judas; Matthew 26:14-16) for money (30 pieces of silver), abandoned by the other 10 disciples out of fear (Matthew 26:47-56), and denied by the same one (Cephas aka Simon Peter) who acknowledged him as the Messiah, the Son of God (Matthew 16:16), fought for him (John 18:10), proclaimed that he would die for him (Matthew 26: 33-35; Luke 22:33-34), and that he even interceded for because the devil was actively trying to attack him (Luke 22:31-32). How do you remain faithful after all of this just to have your father turn his back on you, the same one who asked/sent you to do it? Why

would Jesus remain faithful during this great tribulation and time of testing? Jesus ultimately accepted that this was the only way that we could receive forgiveness and that man could be put right with God. He had observed since Adam that man was incapable of complete obedience to God and true righteousness. Not only did he come to save us, but he came to show us what it looked like to obey God and live righteously, even in times of great trouble/distress. What do you do when God leaves you hanging? You do what Jesus did, you remain faithful/obedient even until the end. Never did he curse God, or speak doubt over his situation because he understood his assignment, and the greater call that God had assigned to him. The 1st words he speaks on the cross is essentially a prayer of intercession for those who wronged him,

34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."

Luke 23:34

not crying out or blaming them for his predicament though the sin of the men on the cross with him, the sin of those who turned him over to Pilate, the sin of the soldiers who beat him and nailed him to the cross, the sin and lack of belief that the disciples showed while walking with him for 3 years and still not knowing who he was and ultimately abandoning him in the garden of Gethsemane, and like the many sins that you and I have and will commit are the ultimate reason that he hung on the cross. When you realize, like Jesus did that his responsibility was to do God's will, you no longer fault or condemn those who mistreat or misunderstand you, because you realize that everything you do is for the Father who sees, knows, AND rewards you for that which you do for the kingdom. The most important thing that Jesus does while hanging there is remain silent while suffering, and crying out to God alone. We will suffer in this life, that is a guarantee, but the important thing is how we conduct ourselves while going through the suffering. I am not saying that we are supposed to suffer in silence, but there is a proper way to cry out, and that is to God 1st, because he is the only one that can get us out of our situations/troubles. Jesus' actions/character on the cross remind me of Job & David in that even in the midst of suffering, he remains faithful.

I will continue to trust God even if he kills me. But I will defend myself to

Job 13:15

Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become restless and distur

Psalms 42:5

To me these passages are similar in that both say during times of trouble or what can feel like rejection, I **CHOOSE** to still trust in and rely on the Lord. I don't have to withhold **ANY** of my emotions, because I have a Father who loves me enough and is strong enough to allow me to be honest and vulnerable with him without judgement. **Jesus was left hanging so that we never have to.** He stayed on the cross to receive the punishment for every one of our sins, and because of the many sins he carried at that moment, God turned his back on his son, so that he would never have to turn his back on us. **No matter how disconnected or troubled we feel or think that we are, we are never left hanging by God to suffer alone because Jesus has already done that for us.** For those of you who may not believe in Jesus, or believe that nobody understands your pain, we have a savior/high priest (Jesus) that is able to identify with all of our pains, and is sitting at the right hand of the Father to defend your case, and intercede on your behalf to the Father.

14-16 Now that we know what we have—Jesus, this great High Priest with ready access to God—let us hold fast to the confession we have made and do not let us slip away from it. For if we confess our sins, he will surely and justly forgive us, and he will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Hebrews 4:14-16 MSG

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Reflection Time

Do you currently feel like God has left you hanging? Friends or family? Are you being honest with yourself about how you are feeling, or have you identified the source of those feelings? Spend some time in reflection and/or prayer asking God to expose and remove those places of pain, weakness, regret, sin, etc. In your times of prayer and time talking with God, be honest with your anger and emotions, give him your heart and those feelings that you have been trying to protect, because he can handle them, and he wants you to drop your burdens/fears/pains on him. Will/Have you accepted the help of Jesus and the Holy Spirit (the comforter; John 14:15-31 ;16:5-15) to lead and guide you into all truths?

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