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# THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

VOLUME XXVII ISSUE 9

SEPTEMBER 20, 2003

# Alone

Few words are more terrible to experience than the simple word "alone." The image conveyed by that term is of one of an isolated, desolate, forlorn loneliness: the state of being without help or hope. Humans do not normally desire to find themselves in solitary existence. We have a natural interdependency that nearly compels us to seek companions in almost every venture of living. Though sometimes we have a desire to be by ourselves—even then, we

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Dr. Art Wilson  
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# this and that

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## Immeasurable the Influence Immense the Loss

Amazingly, I have enjoyed the opportunity to hear many of the leaders among Baptist preachers who have lived during my lifetime. With many of these men, it has been my privilege to benefit from personal times of fellowship. The shared times of travel, meals, or prayer with those giants of the faith are blessings that I would think should be reserved for those beyond my rank. I am grateful for the kindness of a gracious Heavenly Fa-

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preacher, pastor, church planter, evangelist, teacher, author, poet, composer were but some of those. Few men have remained in the ministry as long as did he. Few preachers have preached to as many as did he. Few pastors have planted as many churches as he did. Few evangelists endured unchanged as long as did he.

It is true that not all of his fellow preachers agreed with him or even liked him. It is equally true that no one ever needed to ask where he stood or what it was that he believed. He established a record and faithfully, consistently remained anchored to his convictions, unmoved by the ebb and flow of popularity, not searching for the wave of applause. He was a man to whom the stewardship of the gospel ministry meant the solemn lifelong responsibility of the obligation of duty. He was a preacher who lived to preach and who preached even as he was dying.

With no claim for his infallible perfection or inerrant judgment, this soldier pleased Him Who called him and, I have no doubt, received the "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

He is home, for him the battle is over. Those remaining on the field of conflict will follow, each in due time. For now, we carry the sword, waiting our home-calling and our day of reunion.

Dr. Art Wilson has gone home.

—Pastor Manley

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sion. I sought him to be a spiritual father and he, indeed, graciously accepted me as a son in the faith. His advice and guidance, his counsel and wisdom, his experience and knowledge were always available. In times of personal burdens or ministry crisis, when others shied away or did not respond, this man was never more than a phone call away. I knew he prayed for my family, my church, and for me. I valued his prayers and today feel their loss as greatly as I do the loss of his physical presence.

He was a man of the Scripture as few men were in his generation and as likely, none will be in this present shallow generation. He was, I believe, as close to the character of the Old Testament prophet as any man I ever knew. For him, "Thus saith the LORD" settled any issue, defined all terms, and established every boundary.

He preached in every state of the Union and in multiple nations on every continent, but Antarctica. He delivered the word of God to large congregations and to small assemblies. He was equally at home preaching to thousands as he was in witnessing to one. He was motivated by his gratitude for the grace of salvation, his passion for the lost, and his fervor for the return of the LORD Jesus Christ.

He bore many titles during his long ministry—

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acknowledgment appreciated. *(Continued on page 23)*

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do not wish to be alone, to hear no other voice but our own, to have no communication with or from anyone, and to be isolated with only our own thoughts. It is not good for man or woman to be alone.

There is a greater aloneness than desolate disconnection. There is the condition of being alone without God.

**2 Kings 3**

Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. 2 And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. 3 Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom. 4 And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool. 5 But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. 6 And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel. 7 And

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he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses. 8 And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom. 9 So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them. 10 And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab! 11 But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may inquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. 12 And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. 13 And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee

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## DR. ART WILSON IS HOME

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was eternally too late and for those who are saved to live to please the God of Heaven.

He was not available to preach on the seventh. On September 6, in the first hour of the day, he went Home. He did not wish to abandon the battle. He did not request a discharge. He did not desire to leave his wife; he longed for the Rapture to take them Home together. He was ready, fully prepared, yea, willing to go. With wife and family alongside, this old soldier died; he did not just fade away, nor will he. He laid down the sword that he had carried so faithfully during seven decades of warfare; but his works—the souls brought to the Master for salvation and those taught and instructed in the things of Scripture—will follow him.

I first met him sometime in the 1950's when he came to my home church to preach. I became acquainted with him in 1962 near a phone booth in the Indianapolis airport when I provided transportation to a preaching engagement in my home church. By the time the two of us arrived in Connersville, a friendship began that grew and deepened until he died, September 6. Forty years of fellowship produces an abundance of memories—memories that become a precious treasure to hold against the day of our reunion in the Better Land.

It is not appropriate that I should particularly write at this time of our friendship and this publication would fail to provide sufficient room for an adequate expres-

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ther. As I write today, I recall certain times with Joe Henry Hankins, Dr. Bob Jones Sr., Dr. Bob Jr., Dr. John R. Rice, his brother Dr. Bill, F. R. Bingham, Dr. Noel Smith, and others that are now on the Other Side. I can remember and, even now, sitting here, I can almost hear their prayers for me. While I do not presume to know all the occupations that occupy the occupants of Heaven, I certainly believe that reunions do take place. Those brethren, with all differences settled and 'new natures' fully in control, must have enjoyed opportunities for unfettered fellowship in the 'Land of the Unclouded Day.' Through these years, I have stood by as, one by one, these men of God, having heard the trumpet sound recall, have laid down the sword and joined ranks There.

Now another has left the battlefield, called home to the Ivory Palaces of the King. The last sermon that he preached was to the congregation of this church—some in attendance that day had never before heard him preach. His wife helped him to his study, dialed the number, and he preached by telephone as he had three times previously since he became a hospice patient. I had offered him the pulpit that Sunday, the thirty-first of August, or, if he thought he might be stronger, the following Sunday, September 7. He answered that he would preach "this Sunday," because he might not be able "next Sunday." His theme was on 'watching God practice'—as in the practice of a lawyer or a doctor. He spoke with unction and with an urgent plea for those without Christ to accept the gift of salvation before it

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to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab. 14 And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee. 15 But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. 16 And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. 17 For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. 18 And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

That time came to these three kings. When it came, it suddenly disturbed their lives, quickly disappointed their plans, and rapidly disarranged their designs. It came to them in much the same way as it comes to every person. The arrival may be unexpected or undesired, even unwanted; but, it does

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come—it always comes. Certainly, some will deny that it has ever occurred in their lives and defiantly protest that it will never occur to them. However, it has come or it shall come even to them, because there are no exceptions. As for as those who claim to have avoided this, either (1) they are unwilling to admit the fact of what has already transpired, or (2) they are still alive and while the time has not arrived, it will come. The day is unavoidable.

Even the strongest and most self-reliant of rugged individuals will arrive to a day when the burdens and battles of existence cannot be met alone. The moment comes to everyone when the shocking realization settles in that he or she is not invincible, is not all sufficient, and is not above death. Within the human heart is a nearly universal desire to believe that man is the sole master of his own fate. William Ernest Henley, near the beginning of the last century, wrote INVICTUS, which expressed then, and continues to do so, the arrogant mental concept of many contemporary individuals:

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.  
In the fell clutch of circumstance,

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the thought is of someone else. If you have not accepted the gift of salvation purchased with the blood of the Son of God, I beg you to do so today.

There will be a day when you will realize that you need God. May it be while you are in this world and have opportunity to accept Christ. If not, then it will be in the world to come when it is too late to be saved.

Choose to receive the salvation that is in Christ today, even now, right where you are.

—Pastor Manley

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. . . He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3: 16-18, 36)

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made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

I have been there at such an hour with those who were surely sincere and I have been there with those that seemed most insincere. I have witnessed the pious come to such an hour and I have observed the wicked come to the same hour. I have seen God's grace extended to both.

I also have stood alongside some beds where the Gospel was not received. The person was courteous but simply did not have any interest. They were, as the apostle Paul described "past feeling."

Others told me to return another time because they were not yet ready. More than once, the person was in eternity before the next visiting hour arrived.

I have also been at the side of other beds, too many other beds, where the person refused to let me pray. I have been ordered from the room and told not to return.

Not all find God before eternity and I do not wish to imply otherwise. There are indeed those who scoff at the mention of God, reject the Gospel, and venture into eternity in defiance of God. Their day of aloneness then begins, never to end. I find no joy in writing of those who die without salvation. Eternity alone is a terrifying thought—even when

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I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance,  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.  
Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the Shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds, and shall find me unafraid.  
It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments, the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate;  
I am the captain of my soul.

Strangely, this poem is found in many, if not most, anthologies of religious poetry; however, it is not an expression of faith or a declaration of courage. Rather, the poem is the blatant denial of the existence of a personal God (That term means a living, intelligent, involved Being—a God Who is real and a Person, not a force. It does not mean a god who individually belongs to a particular person.). This poem is the bold declaration that if such a God should exist, then He ought to sit on the sidelines and watch Mr. Henley.

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

Is it not interesting that Mr. Henley openly con-

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fesses that he lived in darkness and darkness black as "the Pit?" "The Pit" is a term with reference to hell and his statement is an unconscious admission of the existence of hell, else the comparison is meaningless. He did live in darkness; it was the black night of the darkness of sin—especially, the darkness of a particular sin, the sin of rejecting the revelation of God. His life in and of darkness resulted from his failure to recognize the evidence of the God of Heaven not the failure of the God of Heaven to give Mr. Henley sufficient revelation. God has revealed Himself and may be 'found' by anyone honestly desiring to do so.

(Acts 17:27) That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

Even a man such as Henley had an encounter with Deity, for the Lord Jesus Christ is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John 1:9), because Jesus Christ is the Light of men (John 1:4). Henley, just as multitudes of others, both before him and since, rejected the Light and chose instead to live in the darkness that, in fact, he loved (John 3:19).

In the fell clutch of circumstance,

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ple words: "Thus saith the Lord." When that hour comes for you—may God be pleased that it may come even at this moment—remember the words of the LORD Jesus:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be

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doctor said, "There is no hope" and have watched the family cry out for a word from God.

I have often been there when someone needed to get in touch with God and had no other hope in this world.

I have seen blood-bought heaven-bound children of the Heavenly Father stagger under the load of the burdens and cry out for a word from the Lord.

It may be in a hospital; it may be in a funeral home; it may be on a highway; it may be in a home; it may be just about anywhere; but the day is coming. It is coming even for you.

"Elisha, we are in a mess. We are facing disaster and have no hope. At sunrise, the battle begins and we have no water. Elisha, what are we to do? Is there a word from the LORD?"

Dear Friend, when such a time comes, you will not care for fancy terms and pleasant sounds. You will not be looking for platitudes and catchy sayings. You will not be listening for a positive mental attitude. You will not seek to discover twelve steps to anywhere. You will not crave a dissertation. You will little care what the Greek and Hebrew have to say. What you need to hear and what you will want to hear will be a word from the Lord. There are no more comforting sounds to hear than those four sim-

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I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance,  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Men delight to suggest that mere chance controls their being, that circumstances dictate their existence, that incidental, fortuitous, unplanned, random, accidental fate is the very best that we can hope to receive in life. Henley and others chose to ignore the God of heaven. But, we do not exist through the whim of accidental happenstance nor are we forced to live in the cruel grasp of fickle circumstance while we grovel in the bondage of chance. There is a God in Heaven and He is alive and well. God is on the Throne of Eternity and He actively exercises his rule in the affairs of men.

Pharaoh received a lesson in this truth in ten installments and he still failed to accept it.

(Exodus 9:29) And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the Lord's.

Pharaoh knew the truth; he decided to try to overturn reality. He failed. Nebuchadnezzar had to go through a refresher, a reminder course to learn

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the truth.

**(Daniel 4:25)** That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

The apostle Paul preached it rather plainly.

**(Ephesians 1:11)** In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Henley may write with bold stroke that  
**Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
 Looms but the Horror of the Shade,**

Unsaved, lost, haughty men and women like to say that the only thing that gives them any trouble about death is that death is entering into the unknown. Ah, but, there is much more to death than just the dying. After death, one will face the God that he or she rejected in this life. Someone said to me recently, "the bad thing about death is that it is so final." Friend, the truth is that death is not at all

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about to go bankrupt and other than suicide saw no relief and asked if I would pray for "a sinful Jew." Those were his words, not mine. I called upon the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and prayed for that weary son of Abraham.

A young woman who had fallen so low as to despair of living called the office many years ago. She said that she had called several churches and could not find anyone who would pray for her. She told me she had taken an overdose of sleeping pills and wanted some preacher to pray for her before she died. She said, "I do not want to die until somebody prays for me." I did and later saw her saved and baptized; thankfully, I also watched her as she lived a productive Christian testimony.

I think of a young man who showed up in the office and said that he was going to try one more time to get in touch with God before he killed himself.

I well recollect a young couple that stopped by the office on the way to the lawyer to start divorce proceedings and said they wanted to give God one more opportunity.

I see in my mind's eye a mother who was dying and wondered who would care for her children and wanted to hear from God before she died.

I have been present a great many times when the

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Christ, then that awakening will be to your great advantage, because such a day will come to you, if it has not already. I tell you plainly that the day when you find yourself on the borders of Moab, facing a major battle with the coming of dawn, and discover that your water supply is gone and observe that your allies are discouraged, then you will need exactly what these three kings needed. They went to a prophet and sought a word from the Lord. They needed to hear from God.

Friend, there will come a day in your life when you will need to hear from God. Others have.

Several years ago, a fellow called and asked if I could meet him at church. I met him about three years before. He was facing a family situation where it really seemed that there was no hope. Details are unnecessary; it is sufficient to say that a son was facing the loss of everything including his freedom if a certain course of action was taken. The man had no hope except, he said, "I want to get in touch with God and I do not know how. I need someone who knows how to pray for me and my son."

I recall a local businessman, a Jewish fellow, who came to the office and said that he had been to the synagogue and several churches and could not find anyone to pray for him. He said that he was

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final. Death is merely the ending of earthly existence and the beginning of the entrance into eternity.

And yet the menace of the years  
Finds, and shall find me unafraid.

It is easy to speak boldly outside the lion's cage; but when the door of the cage is opened and the person is thrust inside, the boldness will vanish and flee away. I do not doubt that it is possible for a person to come to this warped and twisted understanding and brashly brush truth aside and march willfully on as though it were not true. Henley may have walked right up to the door of death without demonstrating any fear of facing the living Holy God into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall (Hebrews 10:31). But once through that entrance, he learned an inescapable, irrevocable lesson in truth and reality. Unless he turned to Christ after the poem was written, William Ernest Henley closed his eyes in this world and opened them in hell. And, in hell, he, just as did the rich man in Luke 15, lifted up his eyes, being in torments.

(Hebrews 9:27) And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:  
Henley and others may boast that to them:  
It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments, the scroll,

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I am the master of my fate;  
I am the captain of my soul.

Oh, but it does matter! And all of the brave talk of facing death unafraid is just so much whistling in the dark. I say again, the time does come when even the strongest and most self-reliant of rugged individuals discover that the battles of life cannot be met alone. The time comes to everyone when the shocking realization settles in that he or she is not invincible and is not all sufficient. Within the human heart is a near-universal desire to believe that man is the sole master of his fate; but that false chatter is a desire that needs to be constantly reinforced, because the heart of man also cries out that God exists.

(Romans 1) 16 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the

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creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind,

Such a time will not come when the sky is clear and bright blue, when the wind is still, when the sea is calm and peaceful. Rather it will sweep down suddenly and unannounced much as winter storm: the skies will be black and troubled, the wind will howl, the seas will rage. And in the turmoil of life, the person will be confronted with his or her frailty and feebleness! Such a time is not the worst of times. In fact, if such a time will jar a person's complacency and jolt the indifference, such a time can be the means to bring a person to Christ.

These three kings had arrived at that place. You have been there or you will be there. If that confrontation will bring you to realize your need of Jesus

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