

1. My palms started to sweat.

My heart pounded in anxiety.

My head began to spin.

No I'm not talking about a relationship!

And even though it sounds exactly like my reaction to watching AFL on TV – that's not what I'm talking about either.

The occasion that brought about this reaction was separation. I was about 6 years old and happily wandering through the aisles of stuff at Coles with my mum.

In my zeal to get to the action figure aisle and feast my eyes on 6yr old wonders like Transformers and Batman figures (which were popular when I was a kid), I'd unknowingly wandered away from my mum who was looking at something far less interesting in the cauliflower aisle.

Do you know that feeling in your heart when you breath in – and you know something just isn't right?

Well in that moment I spun around and I realized that I was alone in a huge shopping centre with all kinds of strange people whizzing by me with their trolleys.

In my 6 year old head I just assumed that mum was going to be just as excited about looking at Transformers as I was - and follow me.

Now I found myself alone and helpless and a little bit worried.

She was probably looking for me and I was running around looking for her and couldn't find her. Not a happy feeling building in my stomach at this stage...

So I left the supermarket and ran out into the shopping centre calling out for mum. And yes, there was a little panic in my voice!

Thankfully, it wasn't long before mum found me.

When she saw me, she came running to me and wrapped her arms around me as I felt a wave of relief.

It was comforting to know I wasn't alone, that I hadn't been left by myself.

And so moving on quickly, I tried to get mum back to the toy aisle...which if I can recall correctly – didn't happen.

2. To be alone, to be abandoned, is an experience most people dread.

For instance, in many prison systems, solitary confinement is considered the harshest punishment. Why? Humans can't take being alone. In a list of life stresses, you know which one is at or near the top? Even ahead of paying tax?

It's the death of a spouse. To feel a sudden sense of abandonment, to feel suddenly alone, is a hard form of suffering to handle. To be abandoned and alone is not pleasant. We know that. We feel it. The disciples knew it. They felt it.

Questions like, why did he leave us, how could he leave us, how could he do this to us would have been running through the disciple's minds.

Until that moment Jesus appeared, where he came and wrapped his arms around the disciples in their grief all with the words,

“Peace be with you. Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

The disciples were going through separation anxiety. Just days before they watched their Savior die a most horrible death.

Then that first Easter morning they heard the news, **“He’s risen! He’s risen indeed!”**

The disciples had forgotten Jesus own words that his whole purpose for becoming one of us was to step into our place and suffer the punishment for every sin, every mistake, every failure we ever committed.

Jesus was stepping in our place and was being forsaken by God for all the times we have forsaken him. Consider how incredible that is: Jesus allowed himself to suffer hell, to be separated from God the Father, for people who so often try to separate themselves from him. People like you and I.

3. Stop and think about it.

Are we always so eager to walk with our Savior step by step throughout our lives? Or are there ever times when we prefer a little distance? For instance, do we always feel comfortable with the thought of our Savior and God watching on with us - every movie or TV show we view or the internet we look at?

With our God hearing each word we have to say to each other – and each word we say about each other?

With our God seeing each thought or desire we have?

Or is it more appealing to separate yourself from him at some of those times and situations?

When we’re honest about it, we have to admit that we have a sinful nature that so often wants to separate from Jesus.

A sinful nature that wants what it wants and doesn’t really care what God or anyone thinks about it.

A sinful nature that wants to do its own thing, fulfill its own desires.

And what should be the result of that sinful separation from our Savior? The result should be, an eternity, of separation from God.

4. And that’s why these words from Jesus on Good Friday, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” are so amazing.

Jesus was forsaken for you and me. Jesus suffered hell for you and me.

You know what that means?

We will never be forsaken.

We will never experience hell.
We will never be separated from our God.

We don't have to suffer through separation anxiety – that terrible realization like a lost kid in a supermarket - that things aren't right and we're all alone.

Why? Because Jesus suffered that punishment for us.
He paid for our sin on the cross.
And before that he lived a perfect life in our place, never separating himself from the will of his Father ***and your heavenly Father.***

And then after he died on the cross, he rose again!
Guaranteeing us that our sins are forgiven!
Guaranteeing that our appearance has changed: that we now look like him – having been joined to him by baptism and faith (together).

It's true. When God the Father looks at you and me, he sees Jesus' perfect life, death, and resurrection in our place.
So what does that make you look like? Like Jesus! Perfect!

So, my perfected friends – united with Jesus...if Jesus suffered hell and separation for you, ***is there anything he won't do for you?***

If he suffered being forsaken by his heavenly Father for you, is there any time he will walk away from loving you?
Any time that he will separate from you?
Any time you'll be alone?

NO! He lived a perfect life for you that you may live forever with him. He died and was forsaken on the cross for you that you will never be alone. He rose from the dead to assure you that this is true.

He came running after you, like a parent searching out a helpless and lost child, and embraced you in his arms.

In your life, he united you with himself and all believers by working faith in your heart. He united you with himself in baptism. He unites you with himself in the Lord's Supper. And he continues to unite you with himself in the Word.

He continues to call you to repentance, to forgive your sins, and to promise that he will never leave you.

*And you know what can change that?
What can make him forsake you?*

NOTHING! Absolutely nothing!

Think about it! Can sin separate you from his love? NO!

- He paid for your sin and now God sees his perfect life in your place.
- Can any trouble, or hardship or persecution separate you from his love?

- NO! He promises to be with you always and to work out everything on this earth for your eternal good.
- Can death or life separate you from his love?
- NO! Jesus conquered death, He lives forever, and promises that you will live with him forever as well!
- Can angels or demons separate you from his love?
- NO! He's the same one who drove out demons and the one whom angels bow down to.
- How about the present or the future?
- NO! He's been around from eternity, known what's going to happen each day of your life from eternity, and will reign over all things for eternity!
- How about height or depth?
- NO! He's everywhere! He's God! He's all-powerful! And he loves you more than you can ever imagine!

And because of that, nothing! Nothing! Nothing can separate you from his love! Look at what that means for your life.

- When you've got no money in the bank, the economy is down, the world is in disarray - *he still loves you, he's still with you.*
- When you sin and hang your head in shame, *he's still with you, he still loves you.*
- When you move far from those you love, *he's still with you, he still loves you.*
- When you lose those you love, he's still with you, he still loves you.
- When you experience pain, loneliness, sickness, death - *he's still with you, he still loves you.*
- When you experience happiness, contentment, success and joy - *he's still with you, he still loves you.*
- In every moment of your life, *he's still with you, he still loves you.*

You are never alone.

And because of that, he's going to give you a very sweet separation.

One day he'll take you out of the suffering and sin and separation of this life, and unite you with every believer of every time and age in the paradise of heaven.

That's a separation to look forward to, and that's a separation that is yours. How can you be sure? **Look again at the cross.**

Travel again to the upper room where the disciples have locked themselves in fear, touch his nail pierced hands and put your hand into his side and listen to Jesus' words.....Amen.