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The Father Is with Me

"And shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." — John 16:32

Summary:

Because believers are united to Christ, they may apply his words to their own experience: they may be left alone, yet they are never without the Father. Providence may remove friends through death, separation, falsehood, or weakness, but God remains faithful when every human support fails. Christians should also seek periods of voluntary solitude, not to abandon their duties, but to pray, examine themselves, escape the world's influence, and enjoy fuller communion with God. Finally, every person must enter death alone, beyond the reach of earthly companions. Even there, the believer is not forsaken. The everlasting arms are underneath, God's presence gives light and comfort, and his counsel leads safely into glory. Therefore, fear may be answered with trust, and failing flesh with confidence in God as the heart's eternal strength and portion.

Outline:

1. **Christ's words belong to believers**
    - Union with Christ allows his people to adopt this confidence in a subordinate sense.
2. **Providence may leave them alone**
    - Bereavement, separation, and human failure may remove every visible support.
3. **Solitude can become a privilege**
    - Retirement gives room for prayer, self-knowledge, and undistracted communion with God.
4. **Death must be entered alone**
    - Friends can accompany us only to its entrance, but the Father remains present within the passage.
5. **The Father never forsakes his people**
    - His everlasting arms, guiding counsel, and promised glory sustain them in every loneliness.

Text

Christians' relationship with Christ makes them conform to him, so they may adopt his words as their own. They may, should, or must sometimes be alone—yet never truly alone, because the Father is with them.

They may be alone through Providence. Death may separate them from loved ones, leaving their acquaintance in darkness; bereavement may draw the sigh, "I watch, and am as a sparrow upon the housetop." The wickedness of power may drive them from society, while false or frail connections abandon them. This is no small trial.

- **Our Saviour** felt his disciples' desertion and said, "I looked for some to take pity, and there was none, and for comforters, and found none"; yet he looked upward and said, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me" (Psalm 69:20; John 16:32).
- **Joseph** was separated from his family and sold into Egypt, but the Lord was with him.
- **John,** banished to Patmos, received visions of the Almighty and was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.
- **Paul** says, "At my first answer," no one stood by him; all forsook him, "notwithstanding the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me." Whoever dies, the Lord lives; whoever fails us, he remains firm. "He is faithful that hath promised. He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

They ought to seek solitude voluntarily—not by becoming recluses who abandon their duties and shun others. The Christian life is a candle meant to shine openly, so people may see our good works and glorify our heavenly Father. Yet frequent retirement for religious purposes is both our duty and privilege. We are never less alone than when alone. God told Ezekiel, "Go forth" into the field, "and there will I talk with thee." Isaac meditated in a field at evening when the Lord brought him Rebekah.

Alone, Jacob prevailed with God and man; Nathanael was encouraged beneath the fig tree; and Peter received a divine revelation while praying on a rooftop. Even the presence of the twelve Patriarchs or Apostles would harm us if it drew us from prayer. No creature can replace God. In solitude, we commune most freely and fully with him, learn his secret and covenant, know ourselves, and shake off the world's influence. It is good to be there.

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Men may live in crowds, but they die alone. Friends and ministers can accompany us only to death's entrance; none can speak from experience or tell us what dying is like. We have never made that journey. Yet the Christian is not alone: "Yea," says David, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

Oh, to have the God of all grace near—a present help in trouble, supporting us with his everlasting arms, shining his countenance upon us, sharing his salvation's joy, and assuring us of glory beyond our experience and thought! See Psalm 56:3, 73:23-26;

> *"O my God, what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."*

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, Morning and Evening Exercises (January 29, Morning), first published in 1854.