

ALONE ! YET NOT ALONE !

" *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*"
(*Heb. xiii. 5.*)

Alone with Jesus ! Oh how sweet
To lay my sorrows at His feet !
So kindly He consents to share
My burden and my ev'ry care.
I know how sweet it is, my God,
To fall before Thee, 'neath Thy rod.

Alone, yet not alone ! One *eye*
That can my ev'ry grief descry—
An eye that beams with pitying love
And scans earth's depths from heaven above :
That never tires, that never sleeps,
But watches while the tried one weeps.

Alone, yet not alone ! One *hand*
To hold the glass as runs the sand ;
To wipe away the scalding tear,
Dispel each gloomy doubt and fear ;
To soothe this wounded heart of mine,
Pouring thereinto oil and wine.

Alone, yet not alone ! One *heart*
To feel my wounds' acutest smart ;
A spacious heart to hide me in,
Safe from the world's o'erwhelming din ;
So mighty, yet so kind and free,
Stooping to love a worm like me.

Alone, yet not alone ! One *voice*
To bid me make the Lord my choice ;
To whisper " Peace " when troubles roll
Like waves across my chasten'd soul ;
To say in accents, soft and mild,
" ' As thy day, so thy strength, ' my child ! "

Alone, yet not alone ! One *ear*
 To suppliant's whisper ever near ;
 Awake to silent agony,
 To bleeding spirit's misery ;
 Attentive to the humblest cry,
 The faintest prayer, the smother'd sigh.

Alone, yet not alone ! One *breast*
 Where I may lay my head to rest ;
 Reposing in those loving arms,
 So calm, so safe from all alarms ;
 Oh here, for ever lying still,
 I'll bow me to my Father's will !



“DYING ALONE.”

I was asked one day to go and see a poor old woman, who had for many years lived quite alone. “And now,” said her neighbour, “she is dying alone, and I have my children to mind, and can only see her once a day.”

Circumstances prevented my going just at once to see her, but those two words, “dying alone,” rang in my ears, and seemed to haunt me from day to day. To live alone appeared to me sad enough, but to die alone, seemed the very depth of human misery. I was young, but had known sorrow, and had stood by several death-beds. I had watched the last breath flicker out by the bed-side of both rich and poor, but none of them had died alone. My own friends were surrounded by every luxury and comfort ; everything that love could plan to make the sick room cheerful and smoothe

the dying pillow, was done by cheerful hands ; and many cherished ones softly glided in and out with words of comfort and sympathy. I had stood, too, by the dying beds of the poor, and had watched with admiration how every nerve had been strained to provide comforts for the sick one out of the hard-earned wages ; and kind neighbours were ever ready to come in and share the weary night-watch. But now a new phase of suffering presented itself, one I had not heard of before, and I oft repeated those dismal words, "dying alone !" "dying alone !" Death on the battle-field amidst the dying and slain, or death in the crowded wards of a hospital, seemed comfort to me compared to this, and I even prayed, "Lord, may I never die alone."

Nearly a week after this I found myself on the way to see the poor creature I did not even know by name, but whose circumstances called for my deepest sympathy—"dying alone !" 'Twas a very low door by which I entered a very small dark room ; the window, but one pane of glass, scarcely giving sufficient light to show distinctly the few objects in that chamber ; and it was with a feeling somewhat akin to awe, I went up to the low bed in the corner, and gazed upon that aged woman dying alone ! It was a calm and pleasant face, though much furrowed and wrinkled by care and years ; her silvery hair was parted upon her brow, and her white cap and sheets showed no signs of neglect—yet she was dying alone !

"Sit down, Miss," she said, with a kindly smile ;

"my neighbour told me you would come some day ; but I thought likely I would be gone home before you came ; but now I hope you have brought me some good word about the Lord."

"I have His word in my pocket," I said.

"Ah ! that's well ; His own word is better than anything we can say. Read for me, please."

As I turned from passage to pasage of the blessed Book, her aged eyes beamed, and her whole soul seemed to drink in the precious words, and, as I prayed with her before leaving, she joined with me in every petition. As I parted from her, I expressed my surprise that she could be so full of peace and joy when dying alone !

"Tsh !" she said, "Christ is with me, and when you have known Him as long as I have known Him, and proved His love as long, you will not wonder. I've known Him more than twenty years, and I've lived much of that time alone with Him, and now I've been dying these six months past, alone with Him ; for few come to see me, and there's few I care to see, for I've Christ always with me, and there's no solitude in that."

I came away from that humble dwelling with very different thoughts from those with which I had entered it. God had a new lesson for me through His aged saint. Her calm face and joyful answer, "Christ is with me," opened up to me depths in Him hitherto unknown ; for though I knew Him as my Saviour and Friend, He was not as yet *everything* to me. I saw this aged servant

of Christ many times after this, and learned from her what I believe I have never forgotten. One day she told me that she had asked the Lord, if it were His will, that some one might be with her when she breathed her last.

"Why?" I asked, thinking she was dreading to die alone.

"Because, if no one saw me die, they would not know I was as happy to die as to live; for Christ is with me now, and shall be with me then, and I shall be with Him forever."

Each day, as I left her, I saw she was passing quick'y to her desired haven. She had few earthly comforts, save those the Lord privileged me to take her; yet she was full of joy, and thankfulness, and unclouded peace. One day I knocked as usual at the door, but got no answer. "Oh," I said, "has she died alone?" With breathless anxiety I opened the door; her hands were clasped, her lips moved in prayer. I stood in silence till her eyes opened and she saw me.

"You've come to see me die," she said. "Sit down. If it was not for others, I would rather be alone with Christ, but you'll stay till the end."

Then in thoughtfulness for me, she said,— "O, but you are young, and you may not like to see any one die."

"Yes," I said, "I should like to be with you."

Pointing to her well-worn Bible, she said— "Read for me once more the last verses of the eighth chapter of Romans."

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

As I closed the book, I was about to ask her if I should pray. I observed a slight movement of the eyelids, she gazed upwards, a radiant smile lit up her features, and her happy spirit was with the Lord. I knelt and closed her eyes, drew the sheet over the pale face of death, came out, locked the door, and, having made a few arrangements with her neighbour as to her remains, I returned home.

The lessons learned in that little room were precious to me. Dear reader, have you learned anything from reading this simple account of one who was truly satisfied with Christ? Can you say, “That is the Christ I have got. He is everything to me, if called to live alone; everything to me, if called to die alone. A Christ who is above, and beyond, and over every earthly circumstance—a Christ who thoroughly satisfies my heart?”



“The secret of all blessing and progress, after a soul has been brought to taste of blessing in Christ, is the being led into intercourse with God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture, knowing Him as the living and true God in action in Scripture. Standing then face to face with Him, we see what poor things we are, and what the blessing for us in this book—called truly God’s library.”

HEARING AND FOLLOWING.

(JOHN X. 27.)

If there be one lack in souls at the present time more marked than another, it is feebleness of appreciation as to these two important points.

The quietness of communion is but little known, not to say enjoyed, in this busy, active day. How truly the moment speaks loudly of *unrest* and *unreality*; and how little is known, even among the saints, of that deep, personal, unexpressed joy in Christ.

The satisfaction of the heart in the personal nearness of the Lord, the being in His company for the simple joy of it, is true communion; thus it is we have common mind with Him, which is the meaning of communion. When this is the case, we know the mind of our Lord and Master, and this it is which qualifies us for every service as Christ's confidential servants: it is well to bear in mind that the amount of our service or the laboriousness of our work does not of itself constitute us confidential servants.

There is a very close alliance, a very intimate connection between the two attitudes of soul we are considering; in fact, they wait the one on the other. It is very blessed to see the *producing* and *maintaining* power, of hearing and following Christ. In a word, it is Christ. He, and He alone, is the blessed source and spring of all that has its rise and satisfaction in Himself. To be a

good *listener*, one must be both *free* and *at rest*. Dear reader, are you? The blessed Son, ever the Father's delight, ever in the bosom of the Father, came into this world of sin, slavery and sorrow, to bring both liberty to the captives and opening of the prison to those that were bound, as well as *relief* of conscience and *rest* of heart to every weary soul: His work and person alone can give freedom and rest. It is mournful to see how little of either exists around us; the disquietude of the age infects the saints, not only in the things that relate to this life, but even in their relationships with God they have not the *fixed, settled* peace which cannot be moved.

With many at the present time it is as it were but the dawn of union, the full day in soul consciousness not having yet come. With them it is like "the morning spread upon the mountains," and hence there is but little, if any, repose; unsatisfied longings, ardent desires as yet unmet, abound in many a heart. Oh, how one longs to see His own people possessing conscious knowledge of union with Christ glorified in the place where He is; this imparts rest of heart, and detaches from earth and its things! Thus it is that the soul listens, absorbed with Him who is its rest. The ear, once engaged with other sounds, now does homage at His feet, and waits upon His words, knowing how to interpret all the tones of His voice, and to treasure them up in the soul. What could be more blessed than an ear at leisure from self

and its surroundings to wait on the word of Jesus? Then it is that we "sit down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit is sweet to our taste" (Cant. ii. 3). Is not this the "house of wine" where He delights to entertain His own during the weary hours of this far-spent night? It is wonderful how little any of us know what real *solitude with God* is! And may I not ask, how is it possible to grow in personal acquaintance with Christ, if the solitude of His company is not sought after and cultivated by His saints? I hope I may not be understood by any as undervaluing the outward means of instruction and soul refreshment which abound on every hand; nothing could be more distant from my thoughts; but I do say that these by themselves will not make up for the loss of meditative solitude with God. Another has said, "Never less alone than when alone;" but alas, how little impress of this is left on any of us!

It is interesting to see this illustrated in the history of Elijah. Remarkable servant of God though he was, it is clear that his life inwardly was not sustained in proportion to his outward testimony. With him the *fire, wind* and *earthquake* were everything; and when outward testimony excited the malignity of the enemy, as is usual, his faith was not equal to the pressure. But mark the blessed tender way of Jehovah with His poor servant.

1st. He is called to go and stand before the Lord, thus proving that solitude is useless unless

it be with God. We may be even as he was, under a juniper tree, or in a cave (1 Kings xix. 4, 9), but *that* is only the solitude of disappointed nature; there is neither *liberty*, nor *rest*, nor *listening* in that. Oh, no, it must be *with God*. "Go forth, and stand upon the mount *before the Lord*."

2nd. The demands of nature must not be yielded to. This is typified by the prophet's fasting forty days and forty nights; that which had been supplied to him was the providing of Jehovah's hand—even a "cake baker," and "a cruse of water," supplies outside nature, in the strength of which all its claims can be set aside.

3rd. The consequence of the two former, the prophet *listens*—he hears "a still small voice;" and thus receives *communications* and *commissions* which previously would have been unintelligible to him.

Following seems to come in as a consequence of what we have had before us: "My sheep *hear* my voice . . . and they *follow me*." As it is the Shepherd's voice that is heard and known by the sheep, so it is the Shepherd Himself they follow; He it is who has gone before. In the passage quoted from John x., we find the blessed Lord, scorned and reproached, leaving the ancient fold of Judaism, and thus going before His sheep, the security to all His own that it was the true way, as well as the authority for the sheep following Him come what might, their hiding-place from danger, and their safe-conduct for the way.

It is very blessed to see how it is the knowing *His* voice here (vs. 4, 5), not that they know all the false voices of strangers, but their security is in knowing His voice, and they likewise follow as they know it.

Dear reader, has your heart found One whom you are now *following*? Is this your one object day by day? It is very blessed to be allowed to serve, but many a one serves in this day who is not following. Remember what He says Himself: "If any man *serve* Me, let him *follow* Me" (John xii. 26), showing the importance He attached to following Him. Oh, for more distinct going forth from all around to follow a rejected Lord and Master, and to esteem it our holiest joy to tread the path He has walked in, rough it may be, but trodden by Himself, who has left His own mark upon every rose and every thorn.

" 'A little while'—He'll come again!
 Let us the precious hours redeem;
 Our only grief to give Him pain,
 Our joy to serve and *follow* Him.
 Watching and ready may we be,
 As those that wait their Lord to see."



"Our true liberty is to belong to God. All that is for oneself is stolen from the rights of Him who has bought us for His own."

CONFUSION AND ORDER.

The Lord found a state of sad and humbling and various confusion in the land that He walked through day by day. But it only gave occasion to His path to shine the brighter—for it was light and only light undimmed by the darkness, and unbroken by the confusion that was all around.

The state of politics and of religion in that day exhibited this confusion. The authority of the Roman was there where Jehovah should have been supreme; Cæsar's image was circulating in Immanuel's land. And He had to do with Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees; with His own kinsfolk according to the flesh in their ignorance; with doctors and scribes in their pride and pretensions; with the multitudes in their self-seeking and fickleness; and with the low condition of His own disciples.

He had to walk through such regions as Galilee, Judea, and Samaria—diverse, I mean, not in place or situation, but in character. For Samaria was the *defiled*, Galilee the *rational*, Judea the *religious*. This we see in John iv. v.

Galilee would receive Him, because they had seen the miracles which He had wrought; but without signs and wonders they would not believe. Like Christendom and her walk every day, Galilee gave Him *historical* faith and acceptance. They believed on competent testimony; but there was no exercise of soul, nor awakening of conscience.

Judea or Jerusalem was occupied with its temple and its sabbath. Religion, or the observance of ordinances, the maintenance of what honoured themselves in their own place as the house or centre of the nation's worship, was chief with them, and prevailed to blind them to the doings of the Son of God.*

Samaria was unclean. It had no character to maintain, no religious honour to vindicate and uphold. But there the conscience was stirred. No miracle had been witnessed there, but no miracle was sought for. Jesus was received there because His words had reached their souls.

This was Galilee, and this was Judea, and this Samaria: Galilee, the rational; Judea, the religious; and Samaria, the defiled. But all such various confusion only glorified the path of Him who knew how to answer every man. Herodians and Sadducees and Pharisees, His kinsfolk and His disciples, the doctors, the scribes, and the multitudes, Galilee, Judea and Samaria, all in their way and season, got their answer from Him. He would not resist, but yet He would escape the snare. His voice should not be heard in the streets, and yet He would leave them unable to answer Him a word. He did not cure the confusion, but He passed through it, only glorifying God the more by reason of it.

And it is our comfort to see this. It tells us

* A great multitude of impotent folk were lingering over Bethesda, though the Son of God was going about healing all manner of diseases, doing the work of Bethesda in a far better way than Bethesda.

that the scenes in which we find ourselves involved day by day are nothing new, and need not be a surprise to us. They may exercise us, and we may fail under them, and to our humbling, but they need neither amaze nor dishearten us. We need not hope to cure it ; but, like the Master, we have to pass through it. Judgment will do its work in its season, and confusion shall cease. But the time of judgment is not yet fully come. Jesus was ever judging the sinner's enemy, but never His own. He contended for us against Satan, but never for His own rights against either the Roman or the Jew. Such was the combination of weakness and strength in Him : ever passing by His own wrongs, but judging all the power of the sinner's enemy, destroying the works of the devil (1 John iii. 8).

And *order* shall succeed judgment, as judgment succeeds long-suffering. In its time, this shall surely be, as now confusion surely is. His hand will form and mould a scene of order in the days of the coming kingdom. And of this order He has already, by His spirit, again and again, in the progress of His grace and wisdom, given pledges and samples. And as we look at this for a little, we shall have to say : How beautifully things take their proper place when the Spirit of God comes to regulate them ! And this is done, as I may say, *noiselessly*—as creation of old assumed all its order under the same Spirit.

We see a sample of this in Gen. xviii. The

Lord had taken counsel with Himself, that He would reveal a matter to Abraham. Upon that, the two angels who had attended Him to Mamre, pass on, while Abraham, on the other hand, draws near. How simple, and yet how beautiful that was! The scene, as without noise or effort, takes its due form. The objects which fill it fall into their right places—the angels leaving the place in the possession of those who had a secret between them, while they themselves, left alone, draw nearer to each other.

So Abraham again in Gen. xxi. He had just been distinguished by divine favour. He had got Isaac, and his house was established by the Lord. The Gentile comes to seek his friendship. Abraham accords it to him heartily—but on the occasion he assumes the place of the better, while Abimelech, though a king, and Phichol, his chief captain, who accompanied his master, without grudging, took the place of the less.

This was another witness of souls finding their right relationship to each other under the hand or Spirit of God, all between them being in the order and harmony of "a noiseless sphere."

The same is seen, and that, too, in a larger field of vision, in Ex. xviii. The ransomed tribes of Israel meet Jethro at the mount of God. Aaron is there, and Moses is there, heads of Israel, priestly and royal heads. But Jethro, nevertheless, takes the place of the better. He was but a stranger, visiting, in company with Moses' Gentile

bride, the Israel of God. But he was *heavenly*—his person and his place tell us that—and he assumes at once, without asking leave and yet without wrong, the rights of the heavenly; and Moses and Aaron as instinctively and at once yield the place of the better to him, both in the sanctuary and on the throne.

O, when the Spirit works, what an end of strife, and emulation, and self-seeking there is! And what relief to the heart such anticipation brings with it.

The interview of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba shows the same.

John and Peter, in the presence of the Lord, take their relations to each other in the same spirit in John xiii. Peter in the distance beckons to John, and John, at that beckoning, being near, presses the bosom of his Lord afresh; and thus together they get out the secret of that bosom. There is no jealousy, no provoking here. One scarcely knows in which to delight the more, the beckoning of Peter to John, or the pressure of John upon the bosom of Jesus, Peter using his brother, or John using his Lord. It is an exquisite sight—lovely to behold, happy to anticipate—to think of communion after such a pattern, when no envyings or provokings will soil the interchanges of heart with heart, when, “which of them shall be the greatest” will be heard no more, the confusion which passions and tempers bring forth gone for ever.

And to these few instances of the beautiful, regulating power of the Spirit I must add that of our Lord and the two disciples going to Emmaus, in Luke xxiv. Jesus, a stranger, had joined Himself to them on the road, and helped their thoughts, and in that way relieved their hearts. The road was *common* property. But when they reach their home, the stranger will not intrude. He may join them on the King's highway, but their house is their castle. They, however, cannot allow this. They are too much His debtors to let Him pass on so soon, and they constrain Him to enter. But upon this, when *faith* has its desires towards Him, if not as yet its knowledge of Him, He at once takes His proper place. He becomes the host rather than the guest; the Lord of the feast dispensing its best provisions, while they, in the fullness of their hearts, awakened to know Him, thankful and happy, own His title. All is in its due order. From the beginning to the end this was so. The scene on the common highway, the scene at the gate of the dwelling, and then the scene inside the house—all is order.

And surely I may say all these are passing shadows, whether in patriarchal or evangelical days, of happy days to come, when, again, in "a noiseless sphere," harmonies, not unisons, shall strike and move the joys of thousands of hearts together. For at the end, as at the beginning, in the scene of redemption at last, as in that of creation at first, all shall be in order both in heaven and on

earth, under the power of the Word and Spirit of God. On earth "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." The wolf and the lamb shall dwell together, the leopard and the kid lie down together. The nations shall delight to own the glories of Zion and minister to her, as best they may, Geba and Sheba, Nebaioth and Kedar. And in the heavens all shall be compacted and joined together, as in the mystery of one body ; principalities and powers, and dominions and thrones, may be diverse, but still consistent and harmonious, dignities.

Thus, in the places of the coming kingdom, whether earthly or heavenly, things will be in beauty and order—moral as well as natural order. The two sticks shall be one. Judah and Israel shall dwell together under the same vine and the same fig tree, and the nations will take the second place, the place of "the less," and take it joyfully.

" There all the millions of His saints
 Shall in one song unite,
 And each the bliss of all shall view
 With infinite delight ! "

The Queen of Sheba was too happy at the sight of Solomon's glory to envy him the possession of it. And Peter, on the holy mount, was so satisfied in the power of that place, that he would count it his happy business to serve those who were above him.

What a relief such a prospect gives ! It is high time to be wearied and ashamed of all the vanity,

the envying and the strife, which we are sensible of within and around. The Syrophenician breathed the happier spirit of the coming kingdom, when she was so heartily willing to be second to Israel, thankful to receive the portion of dogs under the table where the children feasted.

“Blessed are the people that are in such a case !” Blessed to anticipate a state of order—moral, holy, gracious order, kept in the power of the presence of God—such order the Scriptures both pledge and foreshadow. And well it is for us, beloved, if we can, until this age of *order* come, pass on through the *confusion* which is now around us, in something of the light and purity of the mind of Christ.



FRAGMENT.

Those who fight the Lord's battles must be contented to be, in no respect, accounted of—they must expect to be, in no wise, encouraged by the prospect of human praise. And if you make an exception, “that the children of God will praise you, whatever the world may say,” beware of this, for you *may turn them into a world*, and find in them a world, and may sow to the flesh in sowing to their approbation ; and you will neither be benefited by them, nor they by you, so long as respect for them is your motive—so long as you are conscious as to how they will think of you. All such motives are a poison to you, and a taking away

from you the strength in which you are to give glory to God—and because such a time may be needful for you, I beseech you, be prepared for a time when you shall be as persons unknown, even to those that know God. It is not the fact that the misapprehension of the world is the only misapprehension the Christian must be contented to labour under. He must expect even his brethren to see him through a mist, and to be disappointed of their sympathy, and their cheers of approbation. The man of God must walk *alone* with God, he must be contented that the Lord knoweth. And it is such a relief, yea, it is such a relief to the natural man within us, to fall back upon human countenance, and human sympathy, that we often deceive ourselves, and think it brotherly love, when we are just resting on the earthly sympathy of a brother worm.

You are to be followers of Him who was left alone, and you are, like Him, to rejoice that you are not alone, *because the Father is with you*, that you may give true glory to God. Oh, I cannot but speak of it. It is such a glory to God to see a soul that has been, through the flesh, accessible to the praise of man, surrounded by hundreds and thousands of his fellow-creatures, every one of whom he knows how to please, and yet that he should be contented, yea, peaceful and happy in doing, with a single reference to God, that which he knows they will all misunderstand and misconceive! Here was the victory of Jesus!