

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TO MY READERS.

DEAR FRIENDS,

Refreshed in body and mind, I am on my way homeward to my pulpit and my work. I trust that my absence from labour, so profitable to my own health, may prove to be no loss to you, from the stores which I have gathered in my travelling. It is no small strain upon a man's mental powers to preach to the same people, and to publish the sermons for eleven years consecutively; in time the mind which continually labours ceases to be fresh and vigorous, and craves for rest. The soil without fallow, grows poor. Rest is true medicine. That rest, I bless God, I have been enabled to enjoy in the most agreeable and instructive manner, and trust that it will enable me, by Divine assistance, to avoid the sameness and repetition which are sure signs of exhaustion of mind, and poverty of thought, and are certain ere long to render a ministry barren and unprofitable. To be in the very best condition to be used of God is my heart's desire. I would be a bow well-strung, an arrow sharpened by the King. He who works for God should seek to do his work well, and should strive to be fit for labour. To feed the saints, and gather in Christ's blood-bought wanderers is my highest ambition: resting or working, my eye is on this. The most indefatigable must sometimes submit to rest, in order to avoid being laid aside altogether; but work is the happiest and best state for believers; and I feel that it is so. Oh that we, like the spirits before the throne, could serve God day and night, without sin or ceasing.

May I beg a continued interest in my readers' earnest prayers; and may I hope that if ever they receive a blessing in reading my discourses, they will kindly introduce them to their friends and neighbours.

Yours to serve in the Gospel,

Bell Alp, Switzerland, June 16th, 1865.

C. H. SPURGEON.

THE CHURCH'S LOVE TO HER LOVING LORD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?"—Canticles i. 7.

We shall need to lift up our hearts to God and ask to be quickened in grace, or the precious truths in our text will not prove to us "as honey out of the rock," nor the "feast of fat things, of wine and marrow, of wine on the lees well refined." We cannot appreciate the spirituality of this book, unless God's Spirit shall help us. Many read these words and only see a proof of the imaginative power of an eastern mind. Some read to scoff and blaspheme, and others, even good people, neglect to read this book altogether, being unable to drink in its spirit because of their want of that higher life of communion with the Beloved, which is here so beautifully laid open to our view. Now I am persuaded better things of you beloved. I am sure that you believe that every word of God is precious, and most certainly we say of this book, "it is more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey, or the droppings of the honeycomb." This book of the Canticles is most precious to us, it is the inner court of the temple of truth. It seems to us to belong to the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High. We see our Saviour's face in almost every page of the Bible, but here we see his heart and feel his love to us. We shall hope this morning to speak of our own experience, as well as of the Church who is here speaking. You will perceive that she begins with a title, she expresses a desire, she enforces it with an argument:

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"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?"

I. We commence with the title: "O thou whom my soul loveth." It is well to be able to call the Lord Jesus Christ by this name without an "if," or a "but." A very large proportion of Christian people can only say of Christ that they *hope* they love him; they *trust* they love him; but this is a very poor and shallow experience which is content to stay here. It seems to me that no one ought to give any rest to his spirit till he feels quite sure about a matter of such vital importance. We are not content to have a hope of the love of our parents, or of our spouse, or of our children; we feel we must be certain there; and we ought not to be satisfied with a hope that Christ loves us, and with a bare trust that we love him. The old saints did not generally speak with buts, and ifs, and hopes, and trusts, but they spoke positively and plainly. "I know whom I have believed," saith Paul. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," saith Job. "He whom my soul loveth," saith Solomon, in the song as we have it here. Learn, dear friends, to get that positive knowledge of your love to Jesus, and be not satisfied till you can talk about your interest in him as a reality, which you have made infallibly sure by having received the witness of the Holy Spirit, and his seal upon your soul by faith, that you are born of God, and belong to Christ.

Speaking then of this title which rings the great bell of love to Jesus, let us notice first the *cause*, and secondly the *effect* of that love. If we can look into the face of him who once sweat great drops of blood, and call him, "O thou whom my soul loveth," it is interesting to consider what is the cause of our love. And here our reply is very quick. The *efficient cause* of our love is the *Holy Spirit of God*. We should never have had a spark of love to Jesus if it had not been bestowed upon us by the divine worker. Well said John, "Love is of God." Certainly it is so. Our love to Christ is one beam from himself, the Sun. Certainly a man can no more naturally love Christ than a horse can fly. I grant you there is no physical disability, but there is a moral and spiritual disability which effectually disqualifies him from the high and lofty emotion of love to Jesus. Into that dead corpse the living spirit must be breathed; for those who are dead in trespasses and sins cannot love Christ. That heart of stone must be transformed into a heart of flesh, for stones may be hurled at the Saviour, but they can never love him. That lion must become a lamb, or it can never claim Christ as its Shepherd. That raven must be turned into a dove, or it will never fly to Christ as its ark. "Except a man be born again," we may say, he cannot see this precious sparkling jewel of the kingdom of God, love to Christ. Search yourselves then, brethren, do you love him or not, for if you love him, you have been born again; and if you do not love him, then you are still in darkness, and are not his.

"Can you pronounce his charming name,
His acts of kindness tell;
And while you dwell upon the theme,
No sweet emotion feel?"

I think some of us would have to answer—

“A very wretch, Lord, I should prove,
Had I no love to thee;
Sooner than not my Saviour love,
Oh, may I cease to be!”

This, then, is the efficient cause—the Holy Spirit. The *rational cause*, the logical reason why we love Jesus lies in himself—in his looks, in his present working, and in his person, besides many other little founts, which all tend to swell the river—the growing, deepening river of our love to him.

Why do we love Jesus? We have the best of answers—*because he first loved us*. Harken, ye strangers who inquire why we should love the Saviour so. We will give you such reasons that we will satisfy you and set your mouths watering to be partakers of the same reasons, that you may come to love him too. Why do we love him? Because or ever this round earth was fashioned between the palms of the great Creator—before he had painted the rainbow, or hung out the lights of the sun and moon, Christ's delights were with us. He foresaw us through the glass of his prescience; he knew what we should be—looked into the book in which all his “members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them;” and as he looked upon us, the glance was love. He delighted to sit upon the throne of glory, and to remember his dear ones who were yet to be born. It was the great prospect which his mighty and infinite Spirit had—a joy that was set before him, that he should see a multitude that no man could number who should be his beloved for ever.

“Lov'd of my Christ, for him again,
With love intense I'll burn;
Chosen of Thee ere time began,
I choose Thee in return.”

Oh, could you know that Jesus had loved you from before all worlds, you must love him. At least you will grant there cannot be a better reason for love than love. Love demands; nay, it does not demand—it takes by almighty force, by irresistible energy, that heart captive upon whom it thus sets itself.

This Jesus loved us for no reason whatever in ourselves. We were black as the tents of Kedar; we had much deformity but no beauty, and yet he loved us; and our deformity was of such a kind that it might meritoriously have made him hate us. We kicked against him and despised him. Our language naturally was, “We will not have this man to reign over us,” and when we heard of his loving us, we sneered at it. He was despised and rejected of men; we hid as it were, our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not. We thought his love an empty tale, a paltry trifle, and yet he loved us. Nay, we were his enemies. We slew him; we confess with sorrow that we were the murderers of the Prince of Life and Glory. Our hands were stained with his gore and our garments dyed with his blood, and yet he saw all this and loved us still. Shall we not love him? Sure our heart is harder than adamant, because we do not love him more. But it were hell-hardened steel if it did not love at all. Our Saviour so loved us that he stripped himself of his robes of radiance. Listen,

ye children of God, it is the old story over again, but it is always new to you. He stripped himself of his bright array, laid aside his sceptre and his crown, and became an infant in Bethlehem's manger amongst the horned oxen. Thirty years of poverty and shame the King of heaven spent among the sons of men, and all out of love to us. Jesus the heavenly lover, panting to redeem his people, was content to abide here without a place whereon to rest his head, that he might rescue you. See him yonder in the garden in his agony, his soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death; his forehead, nay his head, his hair, his garments red with the bloody sweat. See him giving his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that pluck off the hair. See him as he hides not his face from shame and spitting, dumb like a sheep before her shearers, and like a lamb that is brought to the slaughter, so he opened not his mouth, but patiently bore it all on our behalf. See him with the cross upon his mangled shoulders, staggering through Jerusalem's streets, unwept, unpitied, except by poor feeble women! See him, ye that love him, and love him more as he stretches out his hands to the nail, and gives his feet to the iron. See him, as with power to deliver himself he is made captive. Behold him as they lift up the cross with him upon it and dash it down into its place and dislocate his bones. Hear that cry, "I am poured out like water: all my bones are out of joint. Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Stand, if ye can, and view that face so full of dolor. Look till a sword shall go through your own heart as it went through his virgin mother's very soul. Oh, see him as he thirsts and has that thirst mocked with vinegar. Hear him as he prays and has that prayer parodied, "He cries for Elias, let Elias come and take him down." See him, as they who love him come and kiss his feet and bathe them with their tears. Will you not love him who did all that friend could do for friend; who gave his life for us? Beloved, here are a thousand crimson cords that tie us to the Saviour, and I hope we feel their constraining power. It is his vast love, the old eternal bond, the love which redeemed, which suffered in our stead, the love which pleaded our cause before the eternal throne: it is this which we give as a sufficient reason why we should love the Saviour, if needs be, even unto death.

Moreover, we have another reason. I trust many here can say that they love the Saviour *because of his present dealings towards them*. What has he not done for us this very day? Some of you came here this morning heavy and you went away rejoicing; perhaps you have had answers to prayer this very week. You have passed through the furnace and not a smell of fire has passed upon you. You have had many sins this week, but you have felt the efficacy of his blood again and again. Some of us have known what it is during the past six days to have the ravishing delights of private communion with him. He has made us glad; our spirits have leaped for very joy, for he hath turned again the captivity of our soul. You have drunk of him as of "the brook by the way," and you have therefore lifted up your head. Beloved, if there were nothing else which Christ had done for my soul, that which I have tasted and handled of him within the last few months would make me love him for ever, and I know that you can say the same.

Nor is this all. We love the Saviour because of *the excellency of*

his person. We are not blind to excellence anywhere, but still we can see no excellence like his.

"Jesus thou fairest, dearest one,
What beauties thee adorn!
Far brighter than the noonday sun,
Or star that gilds the morn.

Here let me fix my wandering eyes,
And all thy glories trace;
Till, in the world of endless joys,
I rise to thine embrace."

When Tigranes and his wife were both taken prisoners by Cyrus, Cyrus turning to Tigranes said, "What will you give for the liberation of your wife?" and the King answered, "I love my wife so that I would cheerfully give up my life if she might be delivered from servitude;" whereupon Cyrus said, "That if there was such love as that between them they might both go free." So when they were away and many were talking about the beauty and generosity of Cyrus, and especially about the beauty of his person, Tigranes, turning to his wife, asked her what she thought of Cyrus, and she answered that she saw nothing anywhere but in the face of the man who had said that he would die if she might only be released from servitude. "The beauty of that man," she said, "makes me forget all others." And verily we would say the same of Jesus. We would not deery the angels, nor think ill of the saints, but the beauties of that man who gave his life for us, are so great that they have eclipsed all others, and our soul only wishes to see him and not another; for, as the stars hide their heads in the presence of the sun, so may ye all begone, ye delights, ye excellencies, when Christ Jesus, the chief delight, the chief excellency, maketh his appearance. Dr. Watts saith—

"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole earth would love him too."

And so it seems to us. Could you see him, you must love him. It was said of Henry VIII., that if all the portraits of tyrants, and murderers, and thieves were out of existence, they might all be painted from the one face of Harry VIII.; and turning that round another way, we will say, that if all the excellencies, beauties, and perfections of the human race were blotted out, they might all be painted again from the face of the Lord Jesus.

"All over glorious is my Lord;
Must be beloved, and yet adored."

These are some of the reasons why our heart loves Jesus. Before I leave those reasons, I should like to put a few questions round amongst this great crowd. O friends, would you not love Jesus if you knew something of this love as shed abroad in your hearts—something of this love as being yours? Now, remember, there is a very great promise that Christ has made, and it is this, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Now what does that refer to? Why to any "him" in all the world, that cometh to Christ. Whoever you may be, if you come to Jesus—and you know that means just trusting him, leaning upon him—if you come to him, he will not cast you out; and when he has received you to his bosom, you will then know (but you cannot know till then) how much he loves you, and then, methinks, you will say with us, "Yes, his name is 'Thou whom my soul loveth.'"

I shall now for a short time speak on the *effects* of this love, as we have dwelt on the cause of it. When a man has true love to Christ, it is sure to lead him to *dedication*. There is a natural desire to give something to the person whom we love, and true love to Jesus compels us to give ourselves to him. One of the earliest acts of the Christian's life is to take ourselves, and lay body, soul, and spirit upon the altar of consecration, saying, "Here I am; I give myself to thee." When the pupils of Socrates had nearly all of them given him a present, there was one of the best scholars who was extremely poor, and he said to Socrates, "I have none of these things which the others have presented to thee; but, O Socrates, I give thee myself;" whereupon Socrates said it was the best present he had had that day. "My son, give me thy heart"—this is what Jesus asks for. If you love him, you must give him this.

True love next shows itself in *obedience*. If I love Jesus, I shall do as he bids me. He is my husband, my Lord—I call him "Master." "If ye love me," saith he, "keep my commandments." This is his chosen proof of my love, and I am sure, if I love him, I shall keep his commandments. And yet there are some who profess to love Christ who very seldom think of keeping some of his commandments. "This do ye in remembrance of me," he says, and yet some of you never come to his table. May I gently ask you, how you make this disobedience consort with genuine affection for him? "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

"Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."

We can do anything for those we love, and, if we love Jesus, no burden will be heavy, no difficulty will be great: we should rather wish to do more than he asks of us, and only desire that he were a little more exacting that we might have a better opportunity of shewing forth our affection.

True love, again, is always *considerate* and afraid lest it should give offence. It walks very daintily. If I love Jesus, I shall watch my eye, my heart, my tongue, my hand, being so fearful lest I should wake my beloved, or make him stir until he please; and I shall be sure not to take in those bad guests, those ill-favoured guests of pride and sloth, and love of the world. I shall tell them to be packing, for I have a dear one within who will not tarry long if he sees me giving sideling glances to these wicked ones. My heart shall be wholly his. He shall sit at the head of the table, he shall have the best dish thereon, nay, I will send all others away that I may have him all to myself, and that he may have my whole heart, all that I am, and all that I have.

Again, true love to Christ will make us *very jealous* of his honour. As Queen Eleanor went down upon her knees to suck the poison from her husband's wound, so we shall put our lips to the wound of Christ when he has been stabbed with the dagger of calumny, or inconsistency, being willing sooner to take the poison ourselves, and to be ourselves diseased and despised than that his name, *his cross!* should suffer ill. Oh, what matters it what becomes of us, if the King reigneth? I will go home to my bed, and die in peace, if the King sits on the throne. Let me see King David once again installed in Zion's sacred halls;

and my soul, in poverty and shame, shall still rejoice if the banished King Jesus shall once again come back, and have his own, and take his sceptre, and wear his crown. Beloved, I trust we can say we would not mind if Christ would make a mat of us, if he would wipe his Church's filthy sandals on us, if we might but help to make her pure; we would hold the stirrup for him to mount any day, ay, and be his horsing-block that he might mount his glorious charger, and ride forth conquering and to conquer. Say, what mattereth it what we are, or where we are, if the King have his own?

If we love Christ, again, we shall be *desiring to promote his cause*, and we shall be desiring to promote it ourselves. We shall wish to see the strength of the mighty turned at the gate, that King Jesus may return triumphant; we shall not wish to sit still while our brethren go to war, but we shall want to take our portion in the fray, that like soldiers that love their monarch, we may prove by our wounds and by our sufferings that our love is real. The apostle says, "Let us not love in word only but in deed and in truth." Actions speak louder than words, and we shall always be anxious to tell our love in deeds as well as by our lips. The true disciple asks continually, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" He esteems it his highest honour to serve the Lord. "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."

"There's not a lamb in all the flock,
I would disdain to feed;
There's not a foe before whose face
I fear thy cause to plead.

Would not my ardent spirit vie
With angels round thy throne,
To execute thy sacred will
And make thy glory known?"

Yes, indeed, we thus can sing, and mean, I trust, every word; yea, will go forth into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. We will tell of this love to all, and labour to win for the Master's honour a multitude which no man can number out of every nation, and kindred, and tribe, and tongue and people. I believe in an active love, a love which has hands to labour and feet to run, as well as a heart to feel, eyes to glance, and ears to listen. A mother's love is of the purest and intensest sort in the world, and it is the most practical. It shows itself in deeds of untiring devotion both night and day. So also should it be with us; we should let our affections prompt us to life-long labour. The love of Christ should constrain us to live, and if needs be die to serve him. Heaven is the place of purest, holiest attachment to Christ; then we shall understand most about his love to us, and of all he has done to prove it, and the consequence will be that his servants shall serve him day and night in his holy temple. We are expecting a home in glory not of idleness, but of continual activity. It is written, "His servants shall serve him," and we are taught to pray now that we may do his will on earth as it is done in heaven. Let us, therefore, each one, be busily engaged in the great harvest-field. The harvest is great and the labourers are few. There is room for all, and each man's place is waiting to receive him. If we truly love our Lord, we shall at once press to the front and begin the "work of faith and labour of love." Has not the Master been wont to show his love to us in deeds? Look to Bethlehem, to Gabbatha, to Gethsemane, to Golgotha; yea, look to his whole life as he "went about doing good," and see if all this will

not stir you up to service. Listen to the life-story of the Lord, and you will hear a voice from each one of his deeds of love saying to you, "Go thou and do likewise."

And, once again, if we love Jesus we shall be *willing to suffer for him*. Pain will become light; we shall sing with Madame Guyon

"To me 'tis equal whether love ordain my life or death,
Appoint me ease, or pain."

It is a high attainment to come to, but love can make us think ourselves of so small import that if Christ can serve himself of us, we shall make no choice as to what, or where we may be. We can sing once more—

"Would not my heart pour forth its blood
In honour of thy name,
And challenge the cold hand of death
To damp this immortal flame?"

Our hearts are, I trust, so full of real devotion to Christ, that we can give him everything, and endure all things for his sake. Cannot we say—

"For him I count as gain each loss,
Disgrace for him renown,
Well may I glory in his cross,
While he prepares my crown."

Darkness is light about us if we can serve him there. The bitter is sweet if the cup is put to our lips in order that we may share in his sufferings, and prove ourselves to be his followers. When Ignatius was led to his martyrdom, as he contemplated the nearness of his death and suffering, he said, "Now I begin to be a Christian;" he felt that all that he had done and suffered before was not enough to entitle him to be called a follower of Christ, but now as the Master's bloody baptism was before him, he realised the truth so dear to every right-minded Christian, that he was to be "like unto his Lord." Here we can all prove our love, we can *suffer his will* calmly if we are not able to *do it publicly*.

"Weak as I am, yet through thy love,
I all things can perform;
And, smiling, triumph in thy name
Amid the raging storm."

I pray God we may have such a love moreover as thirsts after Jesus, which cannot be satisfied without present communion with him.

II. This brings me to the thought, which I shall only touch upon as the swallow skims the brook with his wing, and then up and away, lest I weary you; the second point of consideration is the **DESIRE OF THE CHURCH AFTER CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD**: having called him by his title, she now expresses her longing to be with him. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon."

The desire of a renewed soul is to find out Christ and to be with him. Stale meats left over from yesterday are very well when there is nothing else, but who does not like hot food fresh from the fire? And past communion with Christ is very well. "I remember thee from the land of the Hermonites and the hill Mizar;" but these are only stale meats, and a loving soul wants fresh food every day from the table of Christ, and you that have once had the kisses of his mouth,

though you remember the past kisses with delight, yet want daily fresh tokens of his love. He that drinks of this water will never thirst again, it is true, except for this water, and he *will* so thirst for *it*, that he will be like Samuel Rutherford, who began to be out of heart with the buckets and to want to get right to the well-head that he might lie down and drink, and then, if he could have his fill, he would drink the well quite dry. But there is no hope of that, or rather no fear of it: the well can never be empty, for it rises as we drink.

A true loving soul, then, wants present communion with Christ; so the question is, "Tell me where thou feedest? Where dost thou get thy comfort from, O Jesu? I will go there. Where do thy thoughts go? To thy cross? Dost thou look back to that? Then I will go there. Where thou feedest, there will I feed."

Or does this mean actively, instead of being in the passive or the neuter? Where dost thou feed thy flock? In *thy house*? I will go there, if I may find thee there. In private *prayer*? Then I will not be slack in that. In the *Word*? Then I will read it night and day. Tell me where thou feedest, for wherever thou standest as the shepherd, there will I be, for I want thee. I cannot be satisfied to be apart from thee. My soul hungers and thirsts to be with thee. She puts it again, "Where dost thou make thy flock to rest at noon," for there is only rest in one place, where thou causest thy flock to rest at noon. That must be a grace-given rest, and only to be found in some one chosen place. Where is the shadow of that rock? It is very hot just now here in the middle of summer, when the sun is pouring down his glorious rays like bright but sharp arrows upon us, and we, that are condemned to live in this great wilderness of brown bricks and mortar, often recollect those glades where the woods grow thick, and where the waters leap from crag to crag down the hill side, and where the birds are singing among the birks. We delight to think of those leafy bowers where the sun cannot dart his rays, where, on some mossy bank, we may stretch ourselves to rest, or lave our weary limbs in some limpid stream; and this is just what the spouse is after. She feels the heat of the world's sun, and she longs to be away from its cares and troubles that have furrowed and made brown her face till she looked as if she had been a busy keeper of the vineyards. She wants to get away to hold quiet communion with her Lord, for he is the brook where the weary may lave their wearied limbs; he is that sheltered nook, that shadow of the great rock in the weary land where his people may lie down and be at peace.

"Jesus, the very thought of thee,
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see,
And in thy presence rest.

For those who find thee, find a bliss,
Nor tongue, nor pen can show,
The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but his loved ones know."

Now do you not want this to-night? Do not your souls want Christ to-night? My brothers, my sisters, there is something wrong with us if we can do without Christ. If we love him, we must want him. Our hearts ever say,

"Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without thee I dare not die."

Yes, we cannot do without Christ; we must have him. "Give me Christ, or else I die," is the cry of our souls. No wonder Mary Magdalene wept when she thought they had taken away her Lord, and she knew not where they had laid him. As the body suffers without food, so should we without Christ. As the fish perish out of water, so should we apart from Christ. I must quote another verse of a hymn, for really the sweet songsters of Israel have lavished all their best poesy, and very rightly so, to tell for us our love-tale concerning our Beloved. I am sure that our heart's inner voice can set to sweetest music the words:—

"Oh that I could for ever sit
With Mary at the Master's feet:
Be this my happy choice,
My only care, delight, and bliss,
My joy, my heaven on earth be this,
To hear the Bridegroom's voice."

Yes! to be with Jesus is heaven; anywhere on earth, or in the skies, all else is wilderness and desert. It is paradise to be with him; and heaven without Christ would be no heaven to me. My heart cannot rest away from him. To have no Christ would be a punishment greater than I could bear; I should wander, like another Cain, over the earth a fugitive and a vagabond. Verily there would be no peace for my soul. I am sure that the true wife, if her husband is called to go upon a journey, longeth ardently for his return. If he is gone to the wars, she dreads lest he should fall. How each letter comes perfumed to her when it tells of his love and constancy, and how she watches for the day when she shall clasp him in her arms once more. Oh, ye know that when ye were children, if ye were sent to school, how ye counted till the holidays came on. I had a little almanack, and marked out every day the night before, and so counted one day less till the time I should get home again, and so may you.

"May not a captive long his own dear land to see?
May not the pris'ner seek release from bondage to be free?"

Of course he may, and so may you, beloved, pant and sigh, as the hart panteth for the waterbrooks—for the comfortable enjoyment of the Lord Jesus Christ's presence.

III. THE ARGUMENT USED BY THE CHURCH.

Here is the desire. Now, to close, she backs that up with an argument. She says, "Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" Thou hast plenty of companions—why should I be turned aside? Why should I not be one? Let us talk it over. Why should I lose my Lord's presence? But the devil tells me I am a great sinner. Ah! but it is all washed away, and gone for ever. That cannot separate me, for it does not exist. My sin is buried.

"Plung'd as in a shoreless sea—
Lost as in immensity."

The devil tells me I am unworthy, and that is a reason. But I always was unworthy, and yet it was no reason why he should not love me at first, and therefore cannot be a reason why I should not have fellowship

with him now. Why should *I* be left out? Now I am going to speak for the poorest here—I do not know where he is. I want to speak for you that have got the least faith; you that think yourselves the smallest in all Israel; you Mephibosheths that are lame in your feet, and yet sit at the king's table; you poor despised Mordecais that sit at the king's gate, yet cannot get inside the palace, I have this to say to you—Why should you be left there? Just try and reason. Why should I, Jesus, be left out in the cold, when the night comes on. No, there is a cot for the little one, as well as a bed for his bigger brother. Why should *I* be turned aside? I am equally bought with a price. I cost him, in order to save me, as much as the noblest of the saints: he bought them with blood; he could not buy me with less. I must have been loved as much, or else, seeing that I am of so little worth, I should not have been redeemed at all. If there be any difference, perhaps I am loved somewhat better. Is there not greater, better love shown in the choice of me than of some who are more worthy than I am? Why, then, should I be left out? I know if I have a child that is deformed and decrepid, I love it all the more: it seems as if I had a tenderer care for it. Then why should my heavenly Father be less kind to me than I should be to my offspring? Why should *I* be turned aside? He chose me: he cannot change in his choice. Why, then, should he cast me off. He knew what I was when he chose me; he cannot therefore find out any fresh reason for turning me aside. He foresaw I should misbehave myself, and yet he selected me. Well, then, there cannot be a reason why I should be left to fall away. Again, I ask, Why should I turn aside? I am a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, and though I am less than the least of all his saints, yet he has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Why should I turn aside? I have a promise all to myself. Has he not said, "I will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed"? Has he not said, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him; in them that *hope* in his mercy"? If I cannot do more, I can do that. I do hope in his mercy; then why should I be turned aside? If any should think of doing so, it should not be I, for I want to be near him; I am such a poor plant that I ought to be kept in the sun: I shall never do in the shade. My big brother, perhaps, may manage for a little time without comfort, but *I* cannot, for I am one of the Ready-to-Halts. I recollect how the shepherds of Mount Clear said, "Come in, Mr. Little Faith; Come in, Mr. Feeble Mind; Come in, Mr. Ready-to-Halt; Come in, Mary;" but they did not say, "Come in, Father Faithful; Come in, Matthew; Come in, Valiant-for-Truth." No, they said these might do as they liked; they were quite sure to take their own part; but they looked first to the feeblest. Then why should I be turned aside? I am the feeblest, and want his person most. I may use my very feebleness and proneness to fall as the reason why I should come to him. Why should I be turned aside? I may fall into sin. My heart may grow cold without his glorious presence; and then, what if I should perish! Why, here let me bethink myself. If I am the meanest lamb in his flock I cannot perish without doing the God of heaven a damage. Let me say it again with reverence. If I, the least of his children, perish, I shall do his Son dishonour, for what will the arch-fiend say? "Aha," saith

he, "thou Surety of the Covenant, thou couldst keep the strong, but thou couldst not keep the weak: I have this lamb here in the pit whom thou couldst not preserve. Here is one of thy crown-jewels," saith he, "and though it be none of the brightest, though it be not the most sparkling ruby in thy coronet, yet it is one of thy jewels, and I have it here. Thou hast no perfect regalia: I have a part of it here." Shall that ever be, after Christ has said, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand"? Shall this be, when the strong arm of God is engaged for my succour, and he has said to me, "The Eternal God is thy refuge; and underneath are the everlasting arms?" Jesus, turn me not aside, lest by my fall I grieve thy Spirit, and lest by my fall I bring disgrace upon thy name.

Why should I turn aside? There is no reason why I should. Come my soul, there are a thousand reasons why thou shouldest not. Jesus beckons thee to come. Ye wounded saints, ye that have slipped to your falling, you that are grieved, sorrowing, and distressed, come to his cross, come to his throne again. Backsliders, if ye have been such, return! return! return! A husband's heart has no door to keep out his spouse, and Jesus' heart has no power to keep out his people. Return! return! There is no divorce sued out against you, for the Lord, the God of Jacob saith, "He hateth putting away." Return! return! Let us get to our chambers, let us seek renewed fellowship; and, oh, you that have never had it, and have never seen Christ, may you thirst after him to-night, and if you do, remember the text I gave you, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Whosoever thou mayest be, if thou wilt come to Jesus, he will not cast thee out.

"Come, and welcome sinner, come."

God bring thee for Jesus' sake. Amen.
