

LOVE ABOUNDING, LOVE COMPLAINING, LOVE ABIDING.

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**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.” — Isaiah 43:1-4

“But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.” — Verses 22-24.

“Remember these, O Jacob and Israel, for thou art my servant: I have formed thee, thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy

transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.” — Isaiah 44:21-23.

WHEN two Christians met together who were sitting under a very lean and starving ministry, one of them comforted his fellow concerning the miserable discourse by saying, “Never mind, my friend, there is not much in the sermon, but the text is a feast by itself.” So, this morning, if my words should seem to be very poor and powerless, what fullness there is in those three texts! Here you have a dainty meal of three courses. You ought to be well nourished this morning, for I have set before you in these passages of Scripture quite as much as the largest capacity will be able to mark, learn, and inwardly digest. Here is good pasture for the flock, wherein they may not only feed, but lie down.

Did you say, “too much text?” Possibly you might, on other occasions, reproach me with having too little of God’s Word, and too much of my own; but there can be no fault the other way — the more of the Word of the Lord the better. What is man’s word compared with God’s word? It is as chaff to the wheat at worst, and as mere gold-leaf to solid bullion at best. Indeed, my word is of no value at all, except as it is made up of the essence of the divine Word. Far better than our best exposition is the Word itself: this is the pure light of the sun, ours is but a poor candle: of the Scripture itself we cannot have too much. If you derive no other profit from this assembling of yourselves together but to have your earnest attention directed to this precious part of Holy Writ, if the Spirit of God be with you, your meditations will make this a profitable hour.

Notice concerning these three texts, that they are very much alike in this respect — that they are each addressed to God’s people under the names of Jacob and Israel. The first text begins: “The Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel.” And the second is line unto it: “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.” And so is the third: “Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant.” The Lord mentions both the natural and the spiritual names of his servants; and this he does out of love to them. As tender parents will lovingly repeat all their children’s names, sometimes calling

them by one and sometimes by another, as different memories arise in their minds, so the Lord remembers Jacob, the name of his chosen given him at birth, by which he was known as “the supplanter;” and then he repeats that higher name of Israel, the prevailing prince, which he won in a great spiritual struggle, when he wrestled with the angel of the Lord, and would not let him go. To make sure that the people should know to whom he spake, the Lord calls them both Jacob and Israel. We are so apt to set the promise aside for some one else, that it is well to have the full address placed at the head of these heavenly telegrams.

These texts are also like each other, again, from their being each one overflowing with love. Their manner and their matter differ, but their spirit is one. I do not know where the Lord’s love is best seen, when he declares it and tells of what he has done and is doing for his people or when he laments over their want of love in return, or when he promises to blot out their past sin, and invites them to return to him and enjoy his restoring grace. I trust that I may be helped so to handle these words that a sweet fragrance of love shall fill this house, as when choice ointment is poured forth. May you believe and feel the love of God to you; and then may there arise out of your own hearts the perfume of another love, born of the first, and like unto it, the love of your renewed hearts towards your God. This love is a spark of the eternal flame of God’s love for you; may it never be quenched!

I have to set before you divine love in three postures. The first text represents love abounding; the second text, love lamenting; and the third text represents love abiding — remaining constant to its object notwithstanding all the provocations which have grieved it.

I. First, we have in our first text, from the first to the fourth verses, LOVE ABOUNDING. Come, ye that love the Lord, and dwell upon his love. Concentrate your thoughts upon this wonderful theme, to which I trust you are no strangers; for you live in that love, and it is the joy of your hearts. Oh for the melting power of the Holy Ghost to make us feel it now!

Love abounding, I said, and I said well; for you will notice, first the time when that love is declared. The first verse begins, “But now, thus saith the Lord.” And when was that? It was the very time when he was angry with the nation by reason of their great sins. “Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle; and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to

heart.” It was a time, then, of special sin, and of amazing hardness of heart. “It burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.” When a man begins to burn, he generally feels and cries out; he must be far gone in deadly apathy when he is touched with fire and yet lays it not to heart. Yet so the text describes the nation. Notwithstanding this, however, though his people had so provoked him, and though they were so unfeeling under his chastisement, yet the Lord interposes in tones of grace with a word of infinite compassion. “But now, thus saith the Lord.” It was a time of love with God, though a time of carelessness with his people. You expect God’s mercy-words and love-words to come to you after your repentance and obedience; and so, indeed, they do; for the Lord hath choice rewards of grace for those who walk with him in holy fellowship. Yet he restraineth not his mercy to our good times, but he gives us glints of its sunlight in the midst of the storm: he sendeth clear shining after rain. Though he may smite us again and again to drive us from our iniquities, yet even then his gracious heart overflows with love, and he lets fall a word of pity for his mourners.

Notice, next, that the Lord shows his abounding love in these verses by the sweetness of his consolations. “But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not.” “Fear not” is a little word measured by space and letters, but it is an abyss of consolation if we remember who it is that saith it, and what a wide sweep the comfort takes. Fear hath torment, and the Lord would cast it out. Fear keeps us away from him, and so he would chase it quite away. “Fear not,” saith he. As much as to say — I smite thee, but fear not that I will destroy thee. I chasten thee for thy sin, but fear not that I will disown thee, for thou art mine. My countenance is dark with anger against thine iniquities, but still fear not; for my wrath against thy sin is but a form of my love to thyself.

*“In love I correct thee, thy gold to refine,
To make thee at length in my likeness to shine.”*

You that are the people of God may at this hour be smarting, and crying, and sighing. But, oh the love of God to you! He hears your cries, and his compassions are moved towards you. Nothing touches him like the groans of his children. Perhaps you have brought this evil upon yourself by your own fault, and you know it; but the Lord is ready to put away your sin, and make the bones which he has broken to rejoice. The consolations of God are small with you because there is some secret wickedness with you; but

having revealed to you this wrong, and having subdued your heart by his Spirit, he now speaks to you as to one whom his mother comforteth, and he says, "Fear not." Be not broken down with slavish fear; do not imagine that the Lord has changed towards you; do not dream that his promises will fail, or that his mercy is clean gone for ever, so that he will be favorable no more. He knows your sin, and he has visited you for it; but still, "Fear not; for even this is a token that he has not given you up to perish in your sins." He hath redeemed you, and therefore he will purify you to himself; but he will never cast you away. Is it not considerate love on the Lord's part that he would not even have his children endure a fear? He not only removes our dangers, but he soothes our fears. He bends over us, and cries, "Let not your hearts be troubled." He sends the Holy Spirit to be the Comforter, and chase all our fears away. There is a wonderful intensity of affection in this passage spoken as it is by the great God to his people while they are under the rod which they so richly deserve.

Again, notice that the fullness of God's love is to be seen in the way in which he dwells with evident satisfaction upon his past dealings with his people. When we love some favored one, we like to think of all our love passages in years gone by; and the Lord so loves his people, that even when they are under his chastening hand, he still delights to remember his former loving-kindnesses. We may forget the wonders of his grace, but he doth not forget. He says, "I remember thee, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness." If he remembers our poor love, you may be sure that he does not forget his own. In his heart he storeth up the memory of all his works of grace towards his chosen. See how he puts it: "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel." He regards his people as the work of his own hands. He puts it twice over: he claims not only to have created the materials of the nation, but to have formed them into a people. The great potter created our clay, and then fashioned it with infinite skill. Both as to body and soul, we are fearfully and wonderfully made by the Lord our God. The Lord thinks upon you as his dear people, and remembers how he created you, and how he new-created you: how by his infinite grace he made you new creatures in Christ Jesus, and how he has gone on by his Spirit to fashion you, and mould you to his will, so that you are becoming more and more like his dear Son. The Lord mentions this to show his exceeding love: he hath respect unto the work of his own hands. He that has made you with so much care will not break you. He will not abhor that

which his infinite compassion has fashioned. In his great love he dwells upon his relationship to us as our Maker, and says, "I created thee, I formed thee." This is as true of our second creation as of the first. The Lord flashed into our soul the first ray of repentance; he created in us the first look of faith; he wrought in us the first dew of love; and because of this grace-work he turns in love to us, and remembers us still.

Then the Lord passes on to speak of his redemption of his people, saying, "I have redeemed thee." Oh, the fullness of divine love which led the Lord to redeem his people, and then to speak of that deed with pleasure! He brought them out of Egypt, redeemed by the blood of the Paschal Lamb; and in our case he has brought us out of Sin and death, by the blood of the Only Begotten. The Lord doth not repent that he paid such a price for such poor worthless things, but he glories in it. "I have redeemed thee." Our Lord Jesus remembers the pangs we cost him. He cannot leave those to perish in their sins, whom he hath ransomed with his own life. O poor backslider! the broad arrow of the King is on thee he cannot let his enemy rob him of his purchase. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty? Shall Jesus fail to see of the travail of his soul? Picture to your mind this morning the Christ of God looking at the print of the nails in his own hands and feet, viewing those marks with satisfaction, and then with equal satisfaction looking upon us who are his ransomed ones, a heritage purchased unto himself. He cannot be weary of us, for he dwells upon what he has done for our redemption. He chose us for his love, and then loved us for his choice; he redeemed us because he loved us, and now he loves us because he redeemed us.

Moreover, he adds, "I have called thee by thy name." He did so to that nation; but we will dwell rather at this time upon his having personally called us to himself. Oh the love which shines in our effectual calling: it must burn on for ever! There was a day, and we can never forget it, when the gospel of God came to us with a pointed and personal power, such as we never felt before. Like as Mary Magdalene did not know the Savior until he said unto her, "Mary," so we did not know the Lord until he called us by our name. Surely, no love-call with which our mother awakened us in the morning from the happy sleep of childhood was ever more distinct than the call of God's grace to us when he spake unto us, and said, "Seek ye my face." Blessed was the day when our heart replied, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." The Lord appeared of old unto us, he knew our name, for he called us by it: and he knew how to reach our hearts by convicting us of secret

sin: he sent his servants to describe our character, and to say to us, as Nathan to David, "Thou art the man." We could not mistake the personal appeal which fastened cords of love about us, and drew us till we ran unto him who called us. As the Lord of old said to little Samuel, "Samuel, Samuel," and he answered, "Here am I," so hath God said to some of us, as clearly as if we had heard it with our ears, "Come to me," and we have come to him. He is pleased to remember that he hath called us by our name, and this shows that he does not repent of having called us.

Observe, also, how he dwells upon his possession of his people: "Thou art mine," saith he. The Lord God was not ashamed to own his Israel; and now Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren; the Father is not ashamed to call us children; and the Spirit of God is not ashamed to call our bodies his temples. "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." Have you forgotten that you are the Lord's? Yet does he not forget that you are his. You may be false to your covenant and steal yourself from God; but he has set his mark upon you, and you never can obliterate it. He claims you still, notwithstanding all your wanderings and your forgetfulness, and he joyfully asserts his property in you. "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." He defies all comers to take from him those whom he did foreknow by name, and whom he therefore called. Behold the fixity of divine love, and the warmth of heart which causes the Lord to dwell upon his past loving kindnesses! Does not this bring the tears to your eyes?

If you desire to see the overflowings of God's love in another form, notice in the next verse how he declares what he means to do. He says, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." His love casts its eye upon your future. The Lord does not promise you that you shall never go through the waters, nor pass through the fires. He loves you too well to make your way to heaven free from adversity and tribulation, for these things work your lasting good. You will have to go through fire and through water on your way to glory. But he does promise you this: that the deepest waters shall not overflow you, and the fiercest torrents shall not drown you, for this one all-sufficient reason, that he will be with you. When you come to the fires, however terrible their flames, they shall not consume you; nay, they shall not even kindle upon you. Like the three holy children in the furnace, not even the smell of fire shall pass upon you, because his presence shall preserve you to the end. Oh the love of God,

that in the foresight of every grief and every sorrow that can ever befall his children, he pledges himself never to forsake them! He pledges his word that he will be at their side in every trying hour, and this word he pledges to them even though he has felt bound to chasten them. He says, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God." He hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," come life, come death, come temptation, come poverty, come sickness, come assault of Satan, come whatever may from heaven, or earth, or hell, the Lord has promised that he will bear you through, and preserve you to his kingdom and glory. Oh the perseverance, the omnipresence, the omnipotence of divine love! Who is he that shall measure the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of God? Nothing can separate us from it, and nothing can harm us while we abide under its shadow. O cold hearts, do you not feel the warmth of this marvellous love?

Still this is not all. The overflowings of divine love are seen in the Lord's avowing himself still to be his people's God: "I am Jehovah thy God," saith he, "the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior." God giveth himself to you, beloved. What a gift! He endows us, not merely with heaven and earth, things present, and things to come; nor even with the half of his kingdom; but he gives us himself! He saith, "I will be their God." He bids us call him "Our Father." All that God is, he gives to his chosen, and lays himself out for their salvation. "I am Jehovah thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior." Oh, how he must love us, and with what boundless affection must he regard us, when he counts himself to be none too great a portion to bestow on us!

Though one would think he might have come to a close here, the Lord adds his valuation of his people: this was so high that he says, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." To save Israel, he plagued Egypt: fast and heavy were his blows, until he smote all the firstborn of Egypt, the chief of all her strength. Pharaoh and his firstborn were nobodies as compared with Jacob's seed. Further on in history, after Isaiah's day, the Lord moved Cyrus to set Israel free from Babylon, and then gave to the son of Cyrus a rich return for liberating the Jews; for he made him conqueror of Egypt and of Ethiopia and of Seba. God will give more than the whole world to save his church, seeing he gave his only begotten Son. He seems to say to each one of you, "I give everything for you: I value you so much, that all things else shall be as nothing to me so long as I can bless and save you." It has certainly been so with some of us:

all providence has lent itself to promote our welfare; the angels of God have been our servants, and the Spirit of God has been our guide and teacher. We cannot avoid seeing how great events have been made subordinate to the good of persons so insignificant, how the Lord has even bowed the heavens that he might come down to our rescue.

Then the Lord adds another note of great love. He says that he has thought so much of his people that he regarded them as honorable: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee." He publishes his love, not only by his deeds, but by express words. I cannot pronounce these words as God's prophet must have spoken them, much less as God himself would speak them. What a wealth of grace is here! They were poor Israelites, and they had been very guilty, and so they had dishonored themselves; but the Lord says, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable." What an honor the Lord puts upon those who believe in Jesus! "Unto you that believe he is honor." I have known those that have fallen into great sin, and have been made dishonorable thereby; but when grace has renewed them they have been pure and holy and honorable, made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Blood-washed sinners are heaven's right-honourables. Men and women renewed by God's grace are the courtiers of heaven, the peers of the divine kingdom. What love is that which has made us heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ!

Such is the Lord's love, that even in the time when they were not acting as they should, but grieving him, he stands to his love of them, and sets the same value on them as before: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." As if he said: "What I have done I will do again, my love is unalterable;" I will give the same price for thee as of old, if it be necessary. Remember how it is said of the Lord Jesus, "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end." Notwithstanding all their ill-manners he was still their Savior. And it is so with Jehovah the covenant God of Israel: having loved us until now with love so wonderful, he holds to it despite everything which might have turned away his heart. He declares: "Thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life."

Thus, in a very sorry way, I have skimmed the surface of this great sea of love: I beg you now to follow me while we listen to love as it speaks in quite another tone.

II. Our second text is in the minor key, it is LOVE LAMENTING: “But thou hast not called upon me, O Israel” (verse 22). Observe the contrast; for it runs all through, and may be seen in every sentence: I have called thee by thy name; but thou has not called upon me, O Israel. I have called thee mine; but thou hast been weary of me. I have redeemed thee with a matchless price; but thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money. You can work out the contrast yourself, and you will find it most remarkable: I cannot tarry to go into detail.

Israel rendered little worship to God. She gave the Lord little prayer and little praise. Come, brothers and sisters, I will bring no accusations against you, but I will make confession of sin for myself. When we think of God’s delight in us, and his love to us, is it not shameful that we should have been so seldom engaged in devotion towards him? Oh, how slack we have often been in private prayer! How hurried, how superficial! How little of praise have we brought: Now and then a hymn, and this only when we were in the public congregation! How little of secret praise and reverent adoration have we rendered! The Lord has done great things for us, and heaped honor upon us; but how seldom has his name been joyously upon our tongue! How little have we spoken of him or to him! It takes a world of trouble to drive some of God’s children to their Father; they live without him, and are tolerably comfortable; and even when darkness lowers they are slow to run to him. Alas! they hasten to some human friend, instead of returning at once to him who has dealt so bountifully with them. I am not going to dwell upon this, because tender hearts will only need a hint. It we grieve those whom we greatly love, they have only to drop half a word, and we see their drift at once, and endeavor to amend. If we have no love in our hearts, what is the use of a lengthened accusation? It will only embitter and harden. Brethren, may not the Lord of infinite mercy justly say to some of us, “But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob?”

Notice, next, that there has been little fellowship; for the Lord goes on to say, “Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.” The Lord has delighted in us, for he joyously recounts his dealings towards us, saying, “I have created thee and formed thee. I have redeemed thee, and called thee, and made thee mine.” If he had been weary of us we need not have wondered; but we

ought to blush and be silent for shame, because we have wearied of him. Brothers, are we tired of our God? If not, how is it that we do not walk with him from day to day? Really spiritual worship is not much cared for in these days, even by professing Christians. Many will go to a place of worship if they can be entertained with fine music, or grand oratory; but if communion with God is the only attraction, they are not drawn thereby. They can spend many an evening where all sorts of levity and nonsense waste the hour; but when do they spend an evening with their God? If some of you had ever done such a thing, it would be marked down in your diaries as a wonder. Can any of you say, "I did once spend a night with God?" Is it not, then, true, "Thou hast been weary of me?" Alas! some of my hearers have never spoken with God in all their lives: they are not on speaking terms with him; they do not know him. Small wonder is it that you do not believe in him: he alone truly believes in God who has come to know him. He that lives with God, and walks with God, has no questions or doubts about his existence: he has risen long ago above that wretched state of wind. God grant that any of you who are weary at the very mention of eternal things may be delivered from your earth-bondage, and made to rejoice in the Lord.

We are moved by this passage to confess how little of spirituality has been found in the worship which we have rendered: "Thou hast not honored me with the sacrifices." When we have come to worship in public and in private, we have not honored the Lord by being intense therein. The heart has been cold, the mind has been wandering. Often we have the posture of devotion without devotion; the words of praise without the praise; the language of prayer without supplication; attendance at the Lord's Supper without communion. All me! How hosannas languish on our tongues! How nearly our devotion dies! Let us repent and pray for better things.

Again, the Lord mentions that his people have brought him little sacrifice: "Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money: neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices." Everything we have God has given us, and he has given to us far beyond our deserts or even our expectations. What small returns have we made! In the religion of Christ there is no taxation. Everything is of love. It spoils our gifts if we give because we must; it is the voluntariness of what we do for Christ that is the excellence of it. Under the old law there was a certain tithe to pay; but the devout who loved their God were not content with this, they of their own accord

bought sweet calamus with honey, and gave it for the making of incense to be used upon the altar of the Lord. Saints of those times denied themselves luxuries that they might have the high joy of contributing to the worship of the Lord whom they loved. Some saints do this now, and find great delight in it, even as Mary delighted to pour the ointment very precious from her alabaster box upon the head of the Well-beloved. Alas, how little have some done in this direction! I will not dwell upon it; for, as I have already said, a hint is all that is needed by a loving heart. Yet is it not sadly true that many offer to the Lord only that which costs them nothing? If it comes to making sacrifices for the truth's sake they will hear nothing of it.

Once more, it is said that we have been very slack in our consideration of our God. The Lord says, "I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins; thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." The Lord is thoughtful of us, but we are not thoughtful towards him. He considers our feelings, but we treat him with heartless brutishness. God has made us honorable, but we have not made him honorable; he has treated us as dear friends, but we have made a servant of him — made him to serve with our sins. Many treat the Lord as if it was most fit that he should be forgotten: they profess to believe in him, and yet live atheistical lives, unmindful of his presence, regardless of his law. Doubtless many come into his courts unwashed and defiled, having forgotten to seek cleansing through the atonement of his dear Son. They dare to stand before a holy God in their wilful unholiness. Beloved, is it not so? Have not even those who are his people too often spoiled their praises, their prayers, and their secret devotions by a want of preparedness of heart, and cleansing of spirit? Let this question go round; and he that hath the most renewed mind will be the most likely to accuse himself.

I must not fail to remind you that I commenced by declaring that in each of the three voices of the Lord the tone was always that of love. If the Lord did not love us very much he would not care so much about our love towards himself. True love alone knows how to burn with jealousy. How greatly God must love me since I see that he desires to have my whole heart! What condescending tenderness that the Lord of glory should complain, "Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money!" It is the plaint of love. Remember, the Lord does not need our sweet canes nor our money. "The silver and the gold are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." He says to his enemy, "If I were hungry I would not tell thee." He

needs nothing at our hands. But when he chides us for withholding our love-tokens, it is because he values our love, and is grieved when it grows cold. Yonder father does not need anything of his child, and yet when his birthday comes round, and there are whisperings over the house and little contributions, that something may be given to dear father, he is greatly pleased; he is more charmed with the little ones trifling gift than with the gold he wins on the Exchange. It is sweet to live in the thoughts of those we love. You that are blessed with happy domestic life, you know that in these matters you do not look for bare duty, but the free suggestions of love bear the palm. It is because the Lord loves us so much that he bemoans our lack of grateful affection, and sadly mourns — “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.” What hath the Lord done that we should treat him so? O brothers, let us mend our ways. Surely we have treated everybody better than our God. In him we live and move and have our being; and yet, by the way we act, one would think we had never heard of him. He has loved us with an everlasting love, and dealt with us in amazing mercy, and yet we are ungrateful and cold. Well may we smite upon the breasts which harbour such stony hearts, and pray that the Holy Spirit may inspire us with ardor of love to him who loved us, and gave himself for us. God bless these words to you, dear brethren, by his grace!

III. I have now to finish with my third text, which I felt bound to take, lest I should conclude with mourning and lamentation. Our third text exhibits LOVE ABIDING.

Notice, in the twenty-first verse of the forty-fourth chapter, how the Lord still calls his people by the same name: “Remember these, O Jacob and Israel.” Still are the names of his elect like music in the ears of God. One would have feared that he would have dropped the “Israel,” that honorable name, which came of prevailing prayer, since they had not called upon him. Why call him a prevailing prince who had grown weary of his God? We should not have marvelled if the Lord had only called them by their natural and carnal name of Jacob. But no, he harps upon the double title: he loves to think of his beloved as what they were, and what his grace made them. O heir of heaven, God loves you still! God doth earnestly remember you still. Jehovah Jesus wears upon his breast-plate the names of his people, and he has not torn one of the gems from its setting, neither hath he erased a single name of Reuben, Simeon, Gad, or Levi from its jewel. Your name is still upon the palms of his hands. If nothing has touched you before, this

ought to arouse your conscience, and melt your heart. O, child of God, your God remembers you! He calls you still by name, and owns you as his.

Notice in the text how the Lord claims his servants: "Thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant." He has not discharged us, though he has had cause enough for so doing. How often have I prayed, "Dismiss me not thy service, Lord," when I have seen the faultiness of my obedience! I dwell with supreme pleasure upon that sweet assurance, "Thou art my servant; thou art my servant." He has not turned us out of doors, nor given us our wages and said, "Be packing, I shall never make my money's worth of you." I am sure he will never part with us now; for if he meant to do so, he would have done it long ago. When we grow old and gray-headed he will not send us off, as so many firms have lately done with old servants who had given them their youth and their manhood. No, the Lord will not cast off his people. Even to hoar hairs he is the same. This should bind us to him. This should quicken our pace in his service. This should make us eager and earnest to show forth his praise.

Then notice how the Lord assures us in the next line: "O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me." God cannot forget his chosen. You that have Bibles with margins will find that it is also written there, "O Israel, forget not me." The Lord longs to be remembered by us. Did not our loving Lord institute the sacred Supper to prevent our forgetting him! Oh hear him at that table of fellowship tenderly saying: "Do not forget me!" Let us each one cry, "We will remember thee." Canst thou, O heir of immortality, forget him who died for thee? Canst thou forget him that gives thee life eternal? Thou who comest forth from God's own love, begotten unto a lively hope by the Father's grace, thou canst not forget him by whom thou livest. Let us think of our Lord's memory of us, and of his desire that we should remember him, and then let our love flame forth.

Notice with delight the triumph of love, how still he pardons: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." I have seen the clouds come hurrying up, driven by the wind. They were black as night in the distance, and for a while they spread darkness around us. Anon, drops of rain have fallen, for an April shower has come; and the clouds, where were they? Not a vestige remained. The clouds were blotted out, the sky was blue, and all things glittered in the sunlight as if hung with pearls. Thus our God beholds our sins gathering like clouds. He cannot endure them; he sweeps them away; no trace is left. "As far as the east is

from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” Child of God, thy Lord forgives thee. If thou art ashamed and confounded for all thy shortcomings, he has put them all away. Therefore return unto thy God; return to thy first love; return to all thy former joy, and rise to a still higher joy.

See how our text closes with the Lord’s own precept to be glad: “Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.” Out of all dejection arise! Out of all sorrow soar aloft! There is more cause for gladness than for sorrow. What you have done should cause distress of heart; but what the Lord has done is cause for rapture. Heaven and earth help you to praise! The mountains join in your music! The trees of the wood sing out in harmony with your delight! Infinite love has drowned your sins! Almighty grace restores your wanderings! Eternal mercy establishes your goings. Oh for a well-tuned harp! Oh to be taught some flaming sonnet of pure spirits who are before the throne! Wait a while, and be not weary. Love the Lord here, and so prepare for beholding him above. Live after the manner which the whole theme suggests. What manner of persons ought we to be who are so supremely loved! To the glorious name of Jehovah, the God of love, be glory for ever and ever! Amen.