

We may have a veritable tempest, and God *with* us, saying to our hearts, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed;" and again everything fair as noonday, and God *not* with us, leaving us to what we have chosen for ourselves. Thus they *started* well, but "that night they caught *nothing*." Has it not often been so with us, when we have been following our own way? All we have gotten has been *night, toil, and nothing*—darkness and weariness and no recompense. How often I have been on that road myself! This is the dark background of the picture. "But when the *morning* was now come, Jesus stood on the shore," (verse 4.) *Who* is that on the shore, straining His eyes through the darkness? The Lord that loved them. They were all night going away from Him, and He was all night going after them. His whole heart was interested in getting them back. Surely He had heard them bemoaning themselves as Ephraim, saying, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned," (Jer. xxxi. 18), and He cannot rest until they are with Him again.

I have heard a touching incident of a mother recovering her lost daughter. The daughter had lost her situation, lost her character—her name changed, and her virtue gone. The mother's only resource was in God. There was no use writing—she could only pray, and she did pray. At last she could bear it no longer, and started for the distant city, and searched hither and thither in vain. As a last resource she had her photograph taken, and wrote at the foot of the cards these words of a mother's love, "*Mary, I love thee still.*" She asked permission, which was granted, to put them up in houses of ill-fame. Her daughter strayed into one of them, and God turned her eyes to the photograph. She looked at it until she saw the words I have mentioned, and exclaimed, "*My God, does my mother love me yet?*" then I will go back to her again." And back she went; and need I say she was received by a love that thus sought her, and not in vain? And is it not thus that Jesus does to us? Does He not say to us, "*I do earnestly remember thee still.*" I will surely have *mercy*." *This* is what awaits the wanderer. He has only to say one word, and he will be in the arms of Jesus. But we will have to own up—to make a clean breast of it, as people say. "Take with us *words* and He will receive us graciously, and so shall we render Him the calves of our lips" (*praise*).