

"HOW SHALL I GIVE THEE UP?"

HOSEA. XI. 8.

Oh! 'tis a thought would melt a rock
And make a heart of iron move
That his own lips and heav'nly look
Should seek and wish a mortal love.

Come near now. Here are no harsh threatenings; no fiery denunciations.—Sinai is lost in Calvary. Anger is quenched in pity. Infinite guilt is swallowed up in infinite love: and we have a Parent—the cherisher towards us of a thousand regards; the giver of a thousand precious gifts—bending from the throne of His glory and talking with us as a Father with his child.

"How shall I give thee up?" What condescension united with what tenderness. What gentle expostulation, with what a regard for our interest. How love struggles with desert. How affection wrestles with justice. *"How shall I give thee up?"* Give whom up? the kind and filial child of His bosom—the gentle, loving, and obedient follower of His commands? One would think that the heart of the unsolaced parent was struggling and almost bursting over the departed form of one who knew no word but affection; who sought no will but that of his benefactor; whose heart had ever yielded a gentle, ready, and willing response to the very wish of its preserver. But instead, it is he whose long course has been one of folly and sin, of the deepest and blackest ingratitude; of counsels unheeded; of commands disregarded and despised. *"How shall I give thee up?"* Why, we should think that this was just the one that He could give up: and give up too most willingly to the punishment of his deserts. But it is well for us that God's ways are not our ways, and that when all else have given us up; yes, when we have given ourselves up and are heedlessly rushing onward to folly, sin, and destruction, He still holds on to us. How kindly he pursues. How gently He expostulates. *"Why will ye die?"* "O that Israel would return."

"How shall I give thee up?" What condescension. Why, if he did give us up, it would be no loss to Him. The glory of His justice would be brightened rather

than dimmed. There are thousands far better than we, by whom our vacancy in Heaven would be filled. Of these stones, He could raise up children unto Abraham. One word from His mouth, and a whole universe of glorious spheres might burst into existence teeming with beauty and glory, and where this one, poor, weak voice of our praise now ascends, the harmony and rhapsody of a thousand worlds would burst upon Him; yea, the whole firmament with all its glittering orbs might become a mighty organ resonant with his praise, and pealing forth its mighty anthems to His glory. But yet He pursues us: but yet He weeps over us, and cries after, and entreats and urges us, as if we were the only creatures of His workmanship—the sole recipients of his regard. O He knows the mighty worth of a single soul, and we shall know it, and know it too, to our sorrow, unless we heed and turn and love.

"How can I give thee up?" What earnestness combined with what desire.—If sinners were half as earnest in their desires to love God as God is to be loved by them, this world would soon be transformed into a temple of universal praise. If they were half as ready to pray as He is to answer prayer, every mouth would be opened and every tongue loosened. And yet notwithstanding this, how cold many ministers and Christians are in exhorting sinners to Christ, and how much colder many sinners in obeying those exhortations. But this is not God's way. What expostulations! what pleadings! what unutterable desire! *"How shall I deliver thee?"* as if all the wisdom and contrivances which heaven could possibly call forth were to be put to the test for the deliverance of the sinner; as if it were not enough that He had given His only begotten Son; as if it were not enough that the way had been all opened and the heralds sent out to invite them to come in." He says that my home may be full—that one single sinner may not be left unnoticed, unurged, unentreated, *"Compel them,"* for how shall I give them up; them for whom Christ has died; them for whose deliverance all Heaven has been moved; them, the worth of whose souls is not exceeded by the mightiest glories of my power nor the richest splendour of my creation?