

### *How Much Do You Love Me?*

**O**NE DAY, I WOKE EARLY in the morning to watch the sunrise. Ah!...the beauty of God's creation is beyond description.

As I watched, I praised God for His beautiful work. As I sat there, I felt the Lord's presence with me. He asked me, "Do you love me?"

I answered, "Of course, God! You are my Lord and Saviour!"

Then He asked, "If you were physically handicapped, would you still love me?"

I was perplexed. I looked down upon my arms, legs, and the rest of my body and wondered how many things I wouldn't be able to do and thought about the things that I take for granted.

I answered, "It would be tough Lord, but I would still love You."

Then the Lord said, "If you were blind, would you still love my creation?"

How could I love something without being able to see it? Then I thought of all the blind people in the world and how many of them still loved God and His creation.

So I answered, "It's hard to think of it, but I would still love you."

The Lord then asked me, "If you were deaf, would you still listen to my word?"

How could I listen to anything being deaf? Then I understood. Listening to God's Word is not merely using our ears, but our hearts.

I answered, "It would be tough, but I would still listen to Your word."

The Lord then asked, "If you were mute, would you still praise My Name?"

How could I praise without a voice? Then it

occurred to me, God wants us to sing from our very hearts and souls.

It never matters what we sound like. And praising God is not always with a song, but when we are persecuted, we give God praise with our words of thanks.

So I answered, "Though I could not physically sing, I would still praise Your Name."

And the Lord asked, "Do you really love Me?"

With courage and a strong conviction, I answered boldly, "Yes Lord! I love You because You are the one and true God!"

I thought I had answered well, but God asked, "Then why do you sin?"

I answered, "Because I am only human. I am not perfect."

"Then why in times of peace do you stray the furthest? Why only in times of trouble do you pray the earnest?"

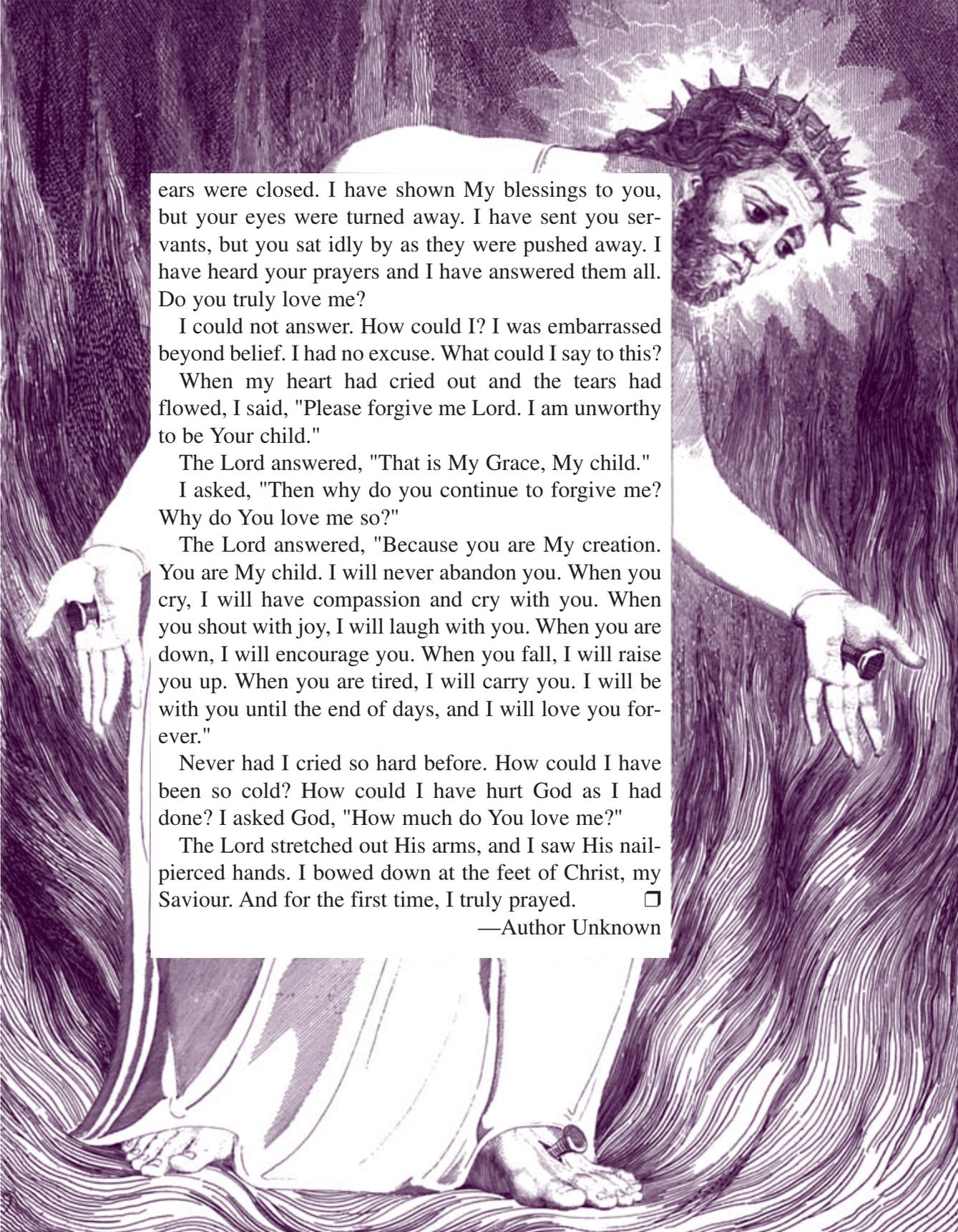
I had no answers...only tears.

The Lord continued. "Why only sing at fellowships and retreats? Why seek Me only in times of worship? Why ask things so selfishly? Why ask things so unfaithfully?"

The tears continued to roll down my cheeks.

"Why are you ashamed of Me? Why are you not spreading the good news? Why in times of persecution do you cry to others when I offer My shoulder to cry on? Why make excuses when I give you opportunities to serve in My Name?"

"You are blessed with life. I made you not to throw this gift away. I have blessed you with talents to serve Me, but you continue to turn away. I have revealed My Word to you, but you do not gain in knowledge. I have spoken to you but your



ears were closed. I have shown My blessings to you, but your eyes were turned away. I have sent you servants, but you sat idly by as they were pushed away. I have heard your prayers and I have answered them all. Do you truly love me?

I could not answer. How could I? I was embarrassed beyond belief. I had no excuse. What could I say to this?

When my heart had cried out and the tears had flowed, I said, "Please forgive me Lord. I am unworthy to be Your child."

The Lord answered, "That is My Grace, My child."

I asked, "Then why do you continue to forgive me? Why do You love me so?"

The Lord answered, "Because you are My creation. You are My child. I will never abandon you. When you cry, I will have compassion and cry with you. When you shout with joy, I will laugh with you. When you are down, I will encourage you. When you fall, I will raise you up. When you are tired, I will carry you. I will be with you until the end of days, and I will love you forever."

Never had I cried so hard before. How could I have been so cold? How could I have hurt God as I had done? I asked God, "How much do You love me?"

The Lord stretched out His arms, and I saw His nail-pierced hands. I bowed down at the feet of Christ, my Saviour. And for the first time, I truly prayed. □

—Author Unknown

Engraving for Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, William Blake (1757-1827), Dover Publications, Inc.