

THE DUMB SINGING NO. 2625

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING OR LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 4, 1899.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT SHOULDHAM STREET CHAPEL,
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*“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing:
for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.”
Isaiah 35:5.*

WHAT a difference divine grace makes, wherever it enters the heart! In our text we find the blind mentioned, but they are no longer blind when once grace has touched their eyes! “Then the eyes of the blind” are “opened.” We read also of the deaf, but they are not deaf after grace has operated upon them! “The ears of the deaf” are “unstopped.” Here are men who have been “lame,” but when once the omnipotent influence of divine grace has come upon them, they leap like a hart! And those who used to be speechless, so far from being dumb any longer, have experienced a change that must be radical, for its effects are surprising. “The tongue of the dumb” not only speaks, but it sings! Divine grace makes a great difference in a man when it enters into him.

How vain, then, are the boasts and professions of some persons who declare themselves to be the children of God and yet continue to live in sin! There is no perceivable difference in their conduct from what it formerly was—they are still what they used to be before their pretended conversion—they are not changed in their acts, even in the least degree. And yet they most positively affirm that they are the called and living children of God, although they are entirely unchanged! Let such people know that their pretensions are lies and that falsehood is the only groundwork they have for their hopes, for wherever the grace of God comes, it makes men to differ from what they were before. A graceless man is not like a gracious man, and gracious men are not like graceless ones—we are “new creatures in Christ Jesus.” When God looks upon us with the eyes of love and works in us conversion and regeneration, He makes us as opposite from what we were before as light is from darkness, and as heaven, itself, is from hell! He works in man a change so great that no mere reformation can even imitate it—it is an *entire* change—a change of the will, of the affections, of the desires, of the dislikes and of the likes. The man becomes, in every respect, new, when divine grace enters his heart. Yet you say of yourself, “I am converted,” and remain just as you were I tell you once again to your face, that you say what is not true—you have no ground for saying it! If grace permits you to sin as you were known to do, then that grace is not divine grace! That grace is not worth having which permits a man to be, after he receives it, what he was before. No, beloved, we must always hold and teach the great doctrine of sanctification. Where God truly justifies, He also really sanctifies. And where there is the remission of sin, there is also the forsaking of it! Where God has blotted out transgression, He also removes our love of it, makes us seek after holiness and walk in the ways of the Lord. I think we may fairly infer this from the text as a prelude to the observations I have to make concerning it.

I want you, first of all, to notice *the sort of people whom God has chosen to sing His praises and to sing them eternally*. Then, in the second place, I shall enter into *a fuller description of the dumb people here mentioned*. Then, thirdly, I shall try to mention *certain special times and seasons when those dumb people sing more sweetly than at others*.

I. First, then, THE PERSONS WHOM GOD HAS CHOSEN TO SING HIS PRAISES FOREVER. “The tongue of the *dumb* shall sing.”

I ask you, first, to note that *there is no difference, by nature, between the elect and others*. Those who are now glorified in heaven and who walk the golden streets clad in robes of purity, were, by nature

as unholy, defiled and as far from original righteousness as those who, by their own rejection of Christ and by their love of sin, have brought themselves into the pit of eternal torment as punishment for their iniquities! The only reason why there is a difference between those who are in heaven and those who are in hell is because of divine grace, and divine grace alone. Those in heaven would have been cast away had not everlasting mercy stretched out its hand and rescued them. They were, by nature, not one whit superior to others! They would as certainly have rejected Christ and have trod under foot the blood of Jesus as did those who were cast away if grace, free grace, had not prevented them from committing that sin! The reason why they are Christians is not because they did naturally will to be so, nor because they did, by nature, desire to know Christ, or to be found of Him—they are now saints simply because God made them so! He gave them the desire to be saved. He put into them the will to seek after Him. He helped them in their seeking and afterwards brought them to feel that peace which is the fruit of justification! But, by nature, they were just the same as others, and if there is any difference, we are obliged to say that the difference does not lie in their favor. In very many cases, those who now “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” were the very worst of men! There are multitudes who now bless God for their redemption who once blasphemed Him—who, as frequently as they dared to do so, implored that the curse of God might rest upon their fellows and upon themselves! Many of the Lord’s anointed were once the very castaways of Satan, the sweepings of society, the refuse of the earth! They were those whom no man cared for, who were called outcasts, but whom God has now called desired ones, seeing that He has loved them!

I am led to these thoughts from the fact that we are told here that *those who sing were dumb by nature*. Their singing does not come naturally from themselves—they were not born songsters. No, they were dumb ones whom God would have to sing His praises. It does not say the tongue of the stammerer, or the tongue of him who blasphemed, or of him who misused his tongue, but, “the tongue of the dumb”—those who have gone furthest from any thought of singing, those who have no power or will to sing—the tongue of such as these shall yet be made to sing God’s praises! It is a strange choice that God has made. Strange for its graciousness, strangely manifesting the sovereignty of His will. When God resolved to build for Himself a palace in heaven of living stones, where did He get them? Did He go to look for the richest and purest marble in the quarries of earthly perfection? No, you saints, “Look unto the rock from which you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from where you were dug.” So far from being stones that were white with purity, you were black with defilement, seemingly utterly unfit to be built into the spiritual temple which would be the dwelling place of the Most High!

Yet He chose you to be trophies of His grace and of His power to save! Goldsmiths make exquisite forms from precious material. They fashion the bracelet and the ring from gold, but God makes His precious things out of base material. From among the black pebbles of the muddy pond He has taken up stones which He has set in the golden ring of His immutable love, to make them into gems to sparkle on His finger forever! He has not selected the best, but apparently the worst of men, to be the monuments of His grace! And when He would have a choir in heaven that would, with harmonious tongues, sing His praises—a chorus that would forever chant hallelujahs louder than the noise of many waters and, like great thunders—He did not send mercy down to seek earth’s songsters and call from us those who have the sweetest voices! No, but He said, “Go, mercy, and find out the dumb, and touch their lips, and make them sing. The virgin tongues that never sang My praises, before, that have been silent until now, shall break forth in sublime rhapsodies and they shall lead the song—even angels shall but attend behind and catch the notes from the lips of those who once were dumb.”

Oh, *what a fountain of consolation this opens for you and for me!* Yes, beloved, if God did not choose the base things of this world, He would never have chosen us! If He had regard unto the countenances of men. If He were a respecter of persons, where would you and I be this day? We would had never been the subjects of His love and mercy! No, as we look upon ourselves, now, and remember what we once were, we are often obliged to ask our Lord—

*“Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there’s room
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”*

And we have no difficulty in finding the right answer in the next verse of the hymn—

*“’Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in,*

*Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.”*

Grace is always grace, but it never seems as gracious as when we see it brought to our unworthy selves. Yes, my friends, you may be Arminians in your doctrine, but you can never be Arminians in your feelings—you are obliged to confess that salvation is all of grace and to cast away the thought that the Lord chose you because of your foreseen faith or good works! We are obliged to come to this point—to feel and know that it must have been of mercy, free mercy, and of that, alone—that we were not capable of doing good works without His grace enabling us to do them and, therefore, they never could have been the motive for the Lord’s love, nor the reason why it flowed towards us! O you unworthy ones, you saints that feel your deep natural depravity and mourn over your ruin by the fall of Adam, lift up your hearts to God! He has delivered you from all the impediments which Adam cast upon you! Your tongue is now loosed—Adam made it dumb, but God has loosed it! Your eyes, which were blinded by Adam’s fall, are now opened by Him who has lifted you up from the horrible pit and the miry clay! What Adam lost for us, Christ has regained for us. He has set our feet upon a rock and established our goings—and He has put a new song into our mouth, even praise unto our God!

Before I leave this point, I must remind you *how this ought to give you encouragement in seeking to do good to others*. Why, my brothers and sisters, I can never think any man too far gone for God’s mercy since I know that He saved me! Whenever I have felt despondent about any of my hearers who have, for a long time, persevered in guilt, I have only had to reach down my own biography from the shelves of my memory and think what I was till divine grace rescued me and brought me to my Savior’s feet. And then I have said, “It will be no wonder if that man is saved—after what the Lord has done for me, I can believe anything of my Master! If He has blotted out *my* transgressions. If He has put away *my* sins, then I can never despair of any of my fellow creatures. They may be dumb, now, but He can make them sing.”

Your son John is a sad reprobate—keep on praying for him, mother—God can change his very nature. Your daughter’s heart seems hard as adamant, but He who makes the dumb sing can cause even that rock to melt! Believe in God for your children, as well as for yourselves! Take their cases before His throne of grace! Rely upon Him to save them and believe that in answer to earnest prayer, He will do so. And if you have neighbors who are full of the pestilence of sin, whose vices come up before you as a stench in your nostrils, yet fear not to carry the gospel to them! Though they are harlots, drunks, swearers, be not afraid to tell them of the Savior’s dying love. He makes the dumb sing—He does not ask for even a voice to begin with—they are dumb and He does not ask of them even the power of speech, but He *gives* them the power! If you have neighbors who keep not the Sabbath, love not God and are not willing to come to His house—and even despise Christ—if you find them as far gone as they can be, remember, He makes the dumb to sing and, therefore, He can make them live!

He needs no goodness in them to begin with—all He needs is the rough, raw material, uncut, unpolished—and He does not even need good material! Bad as the material may be, He can make it into something inestimably precious, something that is worthy of His precious blood! Go on with your work for Christ, dear friends, and fear not concerning the worst of men and women—if the dumb can be made to sing, then surely you can never say that any man need be cast away because Christ cannot save them!

II. I am now to enter into A FULLER DESCRIPTION OF THESE DUMB PEOPLE. Who are they?

Sometimes I get a good thought out of *Cruden’s Concordance*. I believe that is the best commentary to the Bible and I like to study it. I opened it lately at the word, “dumb,” and I found Master Cruden describing five different kinds of dumb people, but I shall name only four of them. The first dumb people he mentions are those who *cannot* speak. Then, secondly, those who *will not* speak. Thirdly, those who *dare not* speak and, fourthly, those who have *nothing* to say and, therefore, are dumb.

Among the dumb people who shall sing are, first, *those who cannot speak*. That is the usual meaning of the word, *dumb*. The others are, of course, only figurative applications of the term. We call a man dumb when he cannot speak. Now, *spiritually*, the man who is still in trespasses and sins is dumb, for he is dead and there is none as dumb as a dead man! We used to hear, in our childhood, that they buried none but deaf and dumb persons in certain churchyards! That saying was intended to tickle our childish fancies and it misled us a little, but the meaning was that none but dead people were buried there. The Word of God assures us that unregenerate men are spiritually dead. It follows, then, that they must be spiritually dumb. They cannot sing God’s praises. They know Him not and, therefore, they cannot exalt His glorious name. They cannot, in their natural state, confess their sins. They may utter the words of

confession, but they cannot really confess, for they do not know the evil of sin, nor have they been taught to feel what a bitter thing it is. “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit,” and these people cannot truly do so. It may be they can talk well of the doctrines of grace, but they cannot speak of them out of the fullness of their hearts, as living and vital principles which they possess in themselves. They cannot join in the songs, nor can they take part in the conversation of Christians. If they sit for a while with the saints, perhaps they let it be known that they have culled a few phrases which they use and apply to certain things about which they know nothing. They talk a language the meaning of which they do not comprehend—like Milton’s daughters reading to their father strange tongues which they did not understand. So far as the essence of the matter is concerned, these spiritually dead people are dumb. But, hail to sovereign grace! “The tongue of the dumb shall sing!” God will have His darlings made what they should be. They are dumb by nature, but He will not leave them so. They cannot now sing His praises, but they shall do it! They do not now confess their sins, but He will yet bring them to their knees and make them pour out their hearts before Him! They cannot now talk the tongue of Canaan, or speak the language of Zion, but they shall do it soon! Grace, omnipotent grace, will have its way with them! They shall be taught to pray! Their eyes shall be made to flow with tears of penitence and then, after that, their lips shall sing to the praise of sovereign grace!

I need not dwell upon this point because there are many here who once were dumb, who can bless God that they now can sing. Does it not sometimes seem to you, beloved, a very strange thing that you are what you are? I should think it must be one of the strangest things in the world for a dumb man to speak—because he has no idea how a man feels when he is speaking, he has no notion of the thing at all! A man, blind from his birth, has no idea what kind of a thing sight can be. I have heard of a blind man who supposed that the color scarlet must be very much like the sound of a trumpet. He knew no other way of describing it. So, the dumb man has no notion of the way to talk. Do you not think it is a strange thing that you are what you are? You said once, “I will never be one of those canting Methodists. Do you think I shall ever make a profession of religion? What? I attend a prayer meeting? It is not likely!” And you went along the streets in all your gaiety of mirth and said, “What? I become a little child and give up my mind to simple faith, and not reason at all? What? Am I to abandon all argument about things and simply take them for granted because God has said them? No, that never can be!” Yet that is what *has* happened and I will be bound to say it will be a wonder to you, as long as you are here, that you are a child of God! And even in heaven, itself, your greatest wonder will be that you were ever brought to know the Savior!

But there are, next, *some dumb people who will not speak*. They are mentioned by Isaiah. He said some of the watchmen in his day were “dumb dogs.” I bless God that we have not so many of these dumb people as we used to have. God has raised up, of late, especially in the Church of England, a large number of thoroughly Evangelical men who are not afraid to declare the whole counsel of God. There are many such faithful preachers of the gospel to be found. [Stated in 1882.] There is no reason why the Church of England should not be thoroughly Evangelical. If it keeps to its Articles, it ought to be! It is the most inconsistent church in all the world if it is not Calvinistic—and it will be inconsistent unless it keeps to those grand fundamental truths of God which are written in its Articles and which are a code of faith to be received by all believers!

But, oh, there are a great many preachers among Dissenters and in the Church of England, too, that are “dumb dogs.” There are still plenty who hardly know anything about the gospel! They preach about a great many things, but little or nothing about Jesus Christ! They buy their sermons cheaply and preach them at their ease. They ask God to teach them what to say and then pull their manuscripts out of their pockets! We have had to mourn, especially in years gone by, that we could look from parish to parish and find only “dumb dogs” in the pulpits. And some men who might have spoken with a little earnestness, if they had liked, let the people slumber under them instead of preaching the Word with true fidelity, remembering that they will have to give account to God at the last! My aged grandfather tells a story which I believe he could verify, of a person who once resided near him and called himself a preacher of the gospel. He was visited by a poor woman who asked him what was the meaning of the new birth, and he replied, “My good woman, why do you come to me about that matter? Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, was a wise man, yet he did not understand about the new birth—how do you think I should?” And she had to go away with only that answer.

The time was when such an answer as that might have been given by a great many who were reckoned to be the authorized teachers of religion, but who really knew nothing about the matter. They un-

derstood a great deal more about fox-hunting than about preaching—and more about farming their land than about the spiritual husbandry of God’s Church! But we bless God that there are not so many of that sort, now, and we pray that the race may become quite extinct—and that every pulpit may be filled with a man who has a tongue of fire and a heart of flame and who shuns not to declare the whole counsel of God, neither seeking the smiles of men nor dreading their frowns!

We have, in our text, a promise that it shall be so. “The tongue of the dumb shall sing.” And ah, when God makes them sing, they sing well! You remember Rowland Hill’s story, in “*The Village Dialogues*” about Mr. Merriman? He was a sad scapegrace of a parson, and was to be seen at every fair and revel, and was seldom to be found in his pulpit when he should have been. But when, by God’s grace, he was converted, he began to preach with tears running down his face! The church soon became crowded, but the squire would not go—he even locked up his pew. So Mr. Merriman had a little ladder made outside the door, as he did not wish to break it open, and the people used to sit on the steps, up one side and down the other, so that there was twice as much room as there was before!

No people make such good preachers as those who were once dumb! If the Lord opens their mouths, they will think they cannot preach often enough, or earnestly enough to make up for the mischief they did before! Chalmers himself might never have been so eloquent a preacher had he not been, for a long time, a dumb dog! He preached morality, he said, till he made all the people in his parish immoral! He kept on urging them to keep God’s law till he made them break it! But when he turned round and began to preach Christ’s gospel, then the dumb began to sing! Oh, may God work this change in every one of us! If we are dumb as professed ministers, may He open our mouths and force us to speak forth His Word, lest, at the last day, the blood of our hearers’ souls should be found upon our garments, and we should be cast away as unfaithful stewards!

I now introduce you to a third sort of dumb people. They are dumb because *they dare not speak*. They are good people, blessed souls. Listen to one of them—“I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because You did it.” Ah, it is blessed to be dumb in that fashion! The Lord’s servant will often have to be dumb under trials and troubles. When Satan tempts him to repine, he will put his finger to his lips and say, “Hush, murmuring heart! Be still!” “Why does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” Even the child of God will sometimes do as Job did when he sat down upon the ground for seven days and seven nights and said not a word, for he felt that his trouble was so heavy that he could say nothing. It would have been as well if he had kept his mouth shut for the next few days—silence would not have been so bad as some things that he uttered! There are times when you and I, beloved, are obliged to keep the bridle on our tongues lest we should murmur against God. We are in evil company. Perhaps our spirit is hot within us and we want to take vengeance for the Lord. We are like the friends of David who would have slain Shimei. “Let us cut off this dead dog’s head,” we say, and then Jesus tells us to put our sword into its scabbard, for, “The servant of the Lord must not strive.” How often have we thus been dumb!

Sometimes, when there have been slanders against our character and men have maligned us, oh, how our fingers have itched to be at them! But we have said, “No. Our Master did not answer His accusers and He has left us an example that we should follow His steps.” The chief priests accused Him of many things, but, “He answered them not a word.” We have found it difficult to be dumb, like the sheep when it is brought to the shearer, or the lamb when it is in the slaughterhouse. We could scarcely keep quiet. When we have been upon our beds in sickness we have tried to quench every murmuring word. We have not let a sentence escape our lips when we could possibly avoid it, but, notwithstanding all that, we have found it hard work to keep dumb—though it is blessed work when we are enabled to do it.

Now, you who have been dumb under great sorrow. You whose songs have been suspended because you dare not open your lips lest sighs should usurp the place of praise, come, listen to this promise—“The tongue of the dumb shall sing.” Yes, though you are now in the deepest trouble and are obliged to be silent, you shall yet sing! Though, like Jonah, you are in the belly of hell, as he called it—though the earth with her bars seems to be about you forever, and the weeds are wrapped about your head—yet you shall look again towards His holy temple! Though you have hung your harp upon the willows, bless God that you have not broken it. You will have farther use for it, by-and-by, and you shall take it down from its resting place and—

*“Loud to the praise of love divine,
Bid every string awake!”*

If you have no songs in the night, yet the Lord shall compass you about with songs of deliverance! If you cannot sing His praises now, you shall do so, by-and-by, when greater grace shall have been poured into your heart, or when delivering mercy shall be the subject of your song in better days that are yet to come! But, blessed be God, we are not always to be silent in affliction. We are bound to sing. Though we are dumb as to murmuring, we ought to sing God's praises! An old Puritan said, "God's people are like certain birds—they sing best in cages." He meant, "God's people often sing the best when they are in the deepest trouble." Said old Master Brooks, "The deeper the flood was, the higher the ark went up toward heaven." So is it with the child of God—the deeper his troubles, the nearer to heaven he rises if he lives close to his Master. Troubles are called weights and weights, you know, generally clog us and keep us down to the earth. But there are ways, by the use of the laws of mechanics, by which you can make a weight *lift* you—and so it is possible to make your troubles lift you nearer heaven instead of letting them sink you! God has sometimes opened our mouth when we were dumb—when we were ungrateful and did not praise Him. He has opened our mouth by a trial and though, when we had a thousand mercies, we did not praise Him, yet when He sent a sharp affliction, then we began to do so! He has thus made the tongue of the dumb to sing.

I will mention one more kind of dumb people, and then I shall have done with this part of my subject. There are *those who have nothing to say* and, therefore, they are dumb. I will give you an instance. Solomon says, in the Proverbs, "Open your mouth for the dumb" and he shows, by the context, that he means those who, in the court of judgment, have nothing to plead for themselves and must stand dumb before the bar. Like that man of old who, when the king came in to see the guests, had not on a wedding garment—and when the king said, "Friend, how came you in here not having a wedding garment?" He stood speechless, not because he could not speak, but because he had nothing to say! Have not you and I been dumb? Are we not now dumb when we stand on *law* terms with God, when we forget that Jesus Christ and His blood and righteousness were our full acquittal? Are we not obliged to be dumb when the commandments are laid bare before us and when the law of God is brought home to our conscience? There was a time with each of us, and not long ago with some here present, when we stood before Moses' seat and heard the commandments read. And when we were asked, "Sinner, can you claim to have kept those commandments?" we were dumb. Then we were asked, "Sinner, can you give any atonement for the breach of those commandments?" And we were dumb. We were asked, "Sinner, can you, by a future obedience, wipe out your past sins?" We knew it was impossible and we were dumb. Then we were asked, "Can you endure the penalty? Can you bear to suffer forever in the flames of hell? Can you endure torments that shall never cease? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings and abide with eternal fires?" And we were dumb.

Then we were asked the question, "Prisoner at the bar, have you any reason to plead why you should not be condemned?" And we were dumb. And we were asked, "Prisoner, have you any helper? Have you anyone who can deliver you?" And we stood dumb, for we had nothing to say. Yes, but blessed be God, the tongue of the dumb can now sing! And shall I tell you what we can sing? Why, we can sing this, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Not God, for He has justified us! "Who is he that condemns?" Not Christ, for "it is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." We who had not a word to say for ourselves, can now say everything! We can say to our Lord—

*"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who anything to my charge shall lay?
While through Your blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame?"*

Yes, the dumb ones can sing! So shall you, poor dumb one, if God has made you dumb by taking away all the names of Baal out of your mouth—if He has taken away all your self-righteousness and all your trust in yourself—as truly as ever He has shut your mouth, He will open it! If God has killed your self-righteousness, He will give you a better one! If He has knocked down all your refuges of lies, He will build you up a good refuge! He has not come to destroy you. He has shut your mouth that He may fill it with His praise. Be of good cheer! Cast your eyes to the cross! Look to Jesus! Put your confidence in Him and even you, who think yourself a castaway—even you, poor weeping Mary—even you shall yet sing of redeeming grace and dying love!

III. Now I have to conclude by noticing THE OCCASIONS WHEN THE TONGUE OF THESE DUMB PEOPLE SINGS THE BEST.

When does the tongue of the dumb sing? Why, I think it sings always, little or much! If it is once set at liberty, it will never leave off singing. There are some of you people who say that this world is a howling wilderness. Well, if so, you are the howlers, you make all the howling! If you choose to howl, I cannot help it, but I prefer the promise of my text, “Then shall the tongue of the dumb,” *not howl*, but, “sing!” Yes, they sing always, little or much! Sometimes it is in a low note. Sometimes they have to go rather deep in the bass, but there are other times when they can mount to the highest notes of all. They have special times of singing. *When they lost their burden at the foot of the cross*—that is the time when they begin to sing! Never did a harp of heaven sound as sweetly as when touched by the finger of some returning prodigal! Not even the songs of the angels seem to me to be as sweet as that first song of rapture which rushes forth from the inmost soul of the forgiven child of God! You know how John Bunyan describes it. He says when poor Christian lost his burden at the cross, he gave three great leaps, and went on his way singing! We have not forgotten those three great leaps—they were great leaps of praise! We have leaped many times since then with joy and gratitude, but we think we never leaped as high as we did at the time when we saw our many sins all gone and our transgressions covered up in the tomb of the Savior! So you see, dear friends that is one time when we can sing— when we lose our burden at the cross.

And after that, do God’s people sing? Yes, they have sweet singing times *in their hours of communion*. Oh, the music of that word, “communion,” when it is heard in the soul—communion with Jesus, fellowship with Jesus—whether in His sufferings or in His glories! These are singing times, when the heart is lifted up to feel its oneness with Christ, and its vital union with Him, and is enabled to “rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” through communion with the Savior!

Have you not had some precious singing times at the Lord’s Table? Ah, when the bread has been broken, and the wine poured out, how often has it been to me a time of song when the people have all joined in singing—

*“Gethsemane, can I forget?
Or there Your conflict see
Your agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember Thee?
When to the cross I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God! My sacrifice!
I must remember Thee.”*

I am in the house of God, I think—every day. I believe that David could not have asked for more than I have received when he prayed that he might dwell in the house of the Lord forever, for I spend more of my time in the house of God than I do anywhere else. But my best moments are at the Lord’s Table. I rejoice then, when I have no thought of what I have to say to others, but simply sit down among the Lord’s family and taste my morsel of bread, and have my sip of the wine. Oh, it is then that the soul finds its Savior precious! I look forward for every month to come when I may once more sit at the table of my Master and spiritually eat His flesh and drink His blood, and feel that I have, indeed, life in Him because I am in true union with Him. Ah, these are singing times to the family of God! And so, sometimes, are *preaching times and hearing times*. *Prayer meetings are often special singing times—in fact, all the means of grace* will very frequently be blessed of God to be to us the occasions of song!

But, lastly, my dear friends, for I cannot stop to mention all these singing times, the best we shall have will be when we come to die! Ah, there are some of you who will be like what is fabled of the swan. The ancients said that the swan never sang in his lifetime, but always sang as he was about to die. Now, there are many of God’s desponding children who seem to go live their life under a cloud, but they get a swan’s song before they die. The river of their life comes running down, perhaps, black and miry with troubles—and when it begins to touch the white foam of the sea, there comes a little glistening in its waters. So, beloved, though we may have been very much dispirited by reason of the burden of the way, when we get to the end we shall have sweet songs! Are you afraid of dying? Oh, never be afraid of that! Be afraid of living! Living is the only thing which can do us mischief—dying never can hurt a Christian! Afraid of the grave? It is like the bath of Esther in which she lay for a time, to purify herself with spices. The grave fits the body for heaven. There it lies and corruption, earth, and worms do but refine and purify our flesh!

Be not afraid of dying—it does not take any time at all. Death is emancipation, deliverance, heaven's bliss to a child of God! Never fear it—it will be a singing time. You are afraid of dying, you say, because of the pains of death. No, they are the pains of *life*—of life struggling to continue. Death has no pain—death, itself, is but one gentle sigh—the fetter is broken, and the spirit released. The best moment of a Christian's life is his last one because it is the one that is nearest heaven—and then it is that he begins to strike the keynote of the song which he shall sing to all eternity! Oh, what a song will that be! It is a poor noise we make, now, when we join the song here. Perhaps we are almost ashamed to sing! But up there our voices shall be clear and good! And there—

*“Loudest of the crowd we'll sing,
While heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace!”*

The thought struck me, the other day, that the Lord will have in heaven some of those very big sinners—ones who have gone further astray than anybody else that ever lived—just to make the melody complete by singing some of those alto notes we sometimes hear which you and I, because we have not gone so far astray, will never be able to utter! I wonder whether one has stepped into this chapel, this morning, whom God has selected to take some of those alto notes in the scale of praise? Perhaps there is one such here. Oh, how loudly will he sing, if grace, free grace, shall have mercy upon him!

And now, farewell, with just this parting word. My brothers and sisters, members of this church, strive together in your prayers, that God may bless you. Be not content with what you are, however prosperous you may be, but seek to increase more and more. Pray that you and your children may be added to the church of Christ, here, and may live to see others added, too. Do not neglect your prayer meetings. Christmas Evans gives us a good idea about prayer. He says, “Prayer is the rope in the belfry. We pull it and it rings the bell up in heaven.” And so it is. Mind you keep that bell going! Pull it often at home and come up to the prayer meetings and keep on pulling it! And though the bell is up so high that you cannot hear it ring, depend upon it, it can be heard in the tower of heaven, and it is ringing before the throne of God, who will give you answers of peace according to your faith. May your faith be large and plentiful, and so will be the answers! Amen.

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