

A NEW SONG FOR NEW HEARTS

NO. 928

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 1, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And in that day you shall say, O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me,
Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.”
Isaiah 12:1.*

THIS prophesy is said by some to relate to the invasion by Sennacherib. That calamity threatened to be a very terrible display of Divine anger. It seemed inevitable that the Assyrian power would make an utter desolation of all Judea. But God promised that He would interpose for the deliverance of His people and punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria. And in that day His people should say, “We will praise You though You were angry with us, and therefore sent the Assyrian monarch to chastise us. Your anger is turned away, and You comfort us.”

If this is the meaning of it, it is an instance of sanctified affliction—and it is a lesson to us that whenever we smart under the rod, we may look forward to the time when the rod shall be withdrawn. And it is also an admonition to us that when we escape from trial we should take care to celebrate the event with grateful praise. Let us set up the pillar of memorial, let us pour the oil of gratitude upon it, and garland it with song, blessing the Lord whose anger endures but for a moment, but whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

It is thought by others that this text mainly relates to the latter days, and I think it would be impossible to read the eleventh chapter without feeling that such a reference is clear. There is to be a time when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the cockatrice den. Then the Lord will set His hand again, the second time, to recover the remnant of His people. Then He will repeat His wondrous works of Egypt and at the Red Sea, so that the song of Moses shall be rehearsed again, “The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.”

In that day the Jewish people upon whose head the blood of Christ has come, who these many centuries have been a people scattered and peeled, and sifted as in a sieve throughout all nations—even these shall be restored to their own land—and the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. They shall participate in all the glories of the millennial reign, and with joy shall they draw water out of the wells of salvation. In those days, when all Israel shall be saved, and Judah shall dwell safely, the jubilant thanksgiving shall be heard, “O Lord, I will praise You. For though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.”

The whole people shall sing with such unanimity, with such undivided heart that they shall speak as though they were but one man. They shall use the singular where their numbers might require the plural, “I will praise You,” shall be the exclamation of the once divided but then united people!

Although both these interpretations are true, and both instructive, the text is many-sided and bears another reading. We shall find out the very soul of the passage if we consider it as an illustration of what occurs to every one of God’s people when he is brought out of darkness into God’s marvelous light. When he is delivered from the spirit of bondage beneath Divine wrath and led by the Spirit of Adoption into the liberty wherewith Christ makes him free. In that day I am sure these words are fulfilled. The Believer does then say right joyously, “O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.”

In regarding the text from this point of view, we shall first observe the prelude of this delightful song. And then, secondly, we shall listen to the song itself.

I. First I shall ask your consideration of THE PRELUDE of this charming song. Here are certain preliminaries to the music. They are contained in the first line of the text. “In that day you shall say.” Here we have the tuning of the harps, the notes of the music follow in the succeeding sentences. Much of instruction is couched in these seven words of prelude. Note then, first, there is a time for that joyous song which is here recorded. “In that day.” The term, “that day,”

is sometimes used for a day of terror, and often for a period of blessing. The common term to both is this—they were both days of the manifestation of Divine power.

“That day,” a day of terrible confusion to God’s enemies. “That day,” a day of great comfort to God’s friends. The day being in either case the time of the making bare of God’s arm and the manifestation of His strength. Now, the day in which a man rejoices in Christ is the day in which God’s power is revealed on his behalf in his heart and conscience, and the Holy Spirit subdues him to the reign of Christ. It is not always that God works with such effectual power as this in the human heart—He has His set times. Oftentimes the word of human ministry proves ineffectual—the preacher exhorts, the hearer listens, but the exhortation is not obeyed. It sometimes happens that even desires may be excited, and yet nothing is accomplished, for these better feelings prove to be as those spring blossoms on the trees which do not knit and fall fruitless to the ground.

There is, however, an appointed time for the calling of God’s elect, a set time in which the Lord visits His chosen with a power of Grace which they cannot effectually resist. He makes them willing in the day of His power. It is a day in which not only is the Gospel heard, but our report is believed, because the arm of the Lord is revealed. To everything, according to Solomon, there is a season—a time to break down and a time to build up. A time of war, and a time of peace. A time to kill, and a time to heal. And even so, there is a time for conviction and a time for consolation.

With some who are in great distress of spirit, it may be God’s time to wound and to kill. Their self-confidence is yet too vigorous, their carnal righteousness is yet too lively. Their confidences must be wounded, their righteousness must be killed. For otherwise they will not yield to Grace. God does not clothe us till He has stripped us. He does not heal till first He has wounded. How should He make alive those who are not dead? There is a work of Grace in the heart of digging out the foundations before Grace begins to build up our hopes—woe to that man who builds without having the foundation dug out—for his house will fall. Woe to that man who leaps into a sudden peace without ever having felt his need of pardon, without repentance, without brokenness of spirit. He shall see his hasty fruit wither before his eyes.

The time when God effectually blesses is sometimes called “a time of love.” It is a time of deep distress to us, but it is a time of love with God—a time wisely determined in the decree and counsel of the Most High—so that healing mercy arrives at the best time to each one who is interested in the Covenant of Grace. Someone may enquire, “When do you think will be the time when God will enable me to say, ‘Your anger is turned away?’ ” My dear Brother, you can easily discern it! I believe God’s time to give us comfort is usually when we are brought so low as to confess the justice of the wrath which He is pouring upon us.

Humbleness of heart is one sure indication of coming peace. A German nobleman some years ago went over the galleys at Toulon. There he saw many men condemned by the French government to perpetual toil at the galley oar on account of their crimes. Being a prince in much repute, he obtained the favor that he should give liberty to one of the captives. He went about among them, and talked to them, but found in every case that they thought themselves wrongly treated, oppressed, and unrighteously punished. At last he met with one who confessed, “In my case my sentence is a most just and even a merciful one. If I had not been imprisoned in this way I should most likely have long ago been executed for some still greater crime. I have been a very great offender, and the law is doing nothing more than it ought to do in keeping me in confinement for the rest of my life.”

The German nobleman returned to the manager of the galleys and said, “This is the only man in all this gang that I would wish to set free, and I elect him for liberty.” It is so with our great Liberator, the Lord Jesus Christ, when He meets with a soul that confesses its demerit, owns the justice of Divine wrath, and has not a word to say for itself. Then He says, “Your sins which are many are forgiven you.” The time when His anger is turned away is the time when you confess the justice of His anger, and bow down and humbly entreat Him for mercy. Above all, the hour of Grace has struck when you look ALONE to Christ.

While you are looking to any good thing in yourself, and hoping to grow better, or to do better, you are making no advances towards comfort. But when you give up in despair every hope that can be grounded in yourself and look away to those dear wounds of His—to that suffering humanity of the Son or God who stooped from Heaven for you—then has the day dawned wherein you shall say, “O Lord, I will praise You.” I pray earnestly that this set time to favor you may be now come—the time when the rain is over, and the voice of the turtle is heard in your land.

Looking again at the preliminaries of this song you notice that a word indicates the singer. “In that day you shall say.” “You.” It is a singular pronoun, and points out one individual. One by one we receive eternal life and peace. “You,” the individual, “you,” singled out to feel in your conscience God’s wrath. You are equally selected to enjoy Jehovah’s love. Ah, Brethren, it is never a day of Grace to us till we are taken aside from the multitude and set by ourselves. Our individuality must come out in conversion—even if it never appears at any other time. You fancy, so many of you, that it is all right with you because you live in a Christian nation. I tell you it is woe unto you! Having outward privileges they involve you in responsibilities, but bring you no saving Grace.

Perhaps you fancy that your family religion may somewhat help you, and the erroneous practices of certain Christian Churches may foster this delusion, but it is not so. There is no birthright godliness—“You must be born again.” The first birth will not help you, for, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh. And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Still, I know you fancy that if you mingle in godly congregations, and sing as they sing, and pray as they pray, it shall go well with you—but it is not so. The wicket gate of eternal life admits but one at a time. Is it not written, “You shall be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel”?

Don’t you know that when the fountain is opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness, it is declared by the Prophet Zechariah, “The land shall mourn, every family apart. The family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart. The family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart”! You must *each one* be brought to feel the Divine anger in your souls, and to have it removed from you, that you may rejoice in God as your salvation.

Has it been so with you, then, dear Hearer? Are you that favored singer? Are you one of that chosen throng who can say, “Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me”? Away with generals. Be not satisfied except with *particulars*. Little matters it to you that Christ should die for ten thousand men, if you have no part in His death. Little blessing is it to you that there should be joy from myriads of hearts because they are pardoned if you should die unpardoned! Seek a personal interest in Christ, and do not be satisfied unless in your own heart you have it satisfactorily revealed that your sin in particular is by an act of Grace put away.

I like to remember that this word, “you,” is spoken to those who have been by sorrow brought into the last degree of despair. “In that day you shall say, though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away.” You poor down-trodden Heart, where are you? You Woman of a sorrowful spirit, rejoice, for in that day of mercy you shall sing. You broken-hearted Sinner, ready to destroy yourself because of the anguish of conscience—in the day of God’s abounding mercy you shall rejoice, even you—and your note shall be all the sweeter because you have had the most sin to be forgiven, and felt most the anger of God burning in your soul. Dwell on that, Mourners, and God grant it may be realized personally by yourselves.

The next thing to be noted in the preliminaries is the Teacher. “In that day you shall say,” who says this? It is God alone who can so positively declare, “you shall say.” Who but the Lord can thus command man’s heart and speech? It is the Lord alone. He who has made us is master of our spirits. By His Omnipotence He rules in the world of mind as well as matter, and all things happen as He ordains. He says, “In that day,” that is, in God’s own time, “you shall say.” And He who thus declares will make good the word. Here is revealed God’s will—and what the Lord wills shall be accomplished. What He declares shall be spoken, shall assuredly be spoken.

Here is consolation to those feeble folk who fear the Word will not be fulfilled. “You shall say,” is a Divine Word and cannot fail. The Lord, alone, can give a man the right to say, “Your anger is turned away.” If any man presumes to say, “God has turned His anger away from me,” without a warrant from the Most High, that man lies to his own confusion. But when it is written, “You shall say,” it is as though God had said, “I will make it true, so that you shall be fully justified in the declaration.” Yet more comfort is here, for even when the right to such a blessing is bestowed, we are often unable to enjoy it because of weakness.

Unbelief is frequently so great that many things which are true we cannot receive. Under a sense of sin we are so desponding that we think God’s mercy too great for us. And therefore we are not able to appropriate the blessing presented to us, though it is inexpressibly delightful. Blessed be God, the Holy Spirit knows how to chase away our unbelief and give us power to embrace the blessing! He can make us accept the Covenant favor and rejoice in it so as to avow the joy.

There are some of you whom I have tried to induce to believe comfortable truths about yourselves, but you have fairly defeated me. I have put the Gospel plainly to you, for I have felt sure that its promises were meant for you. And I have said within my heart, “Surely they will be comforted this morning. Certainly their broken hearts will be bound up by that gracious Word.” But oh, I cannot make you say, “Lord, I will praise You.” I am unable to lead you to faith and peace. Here, however, is my joy—my Master can do what His servant cannot! He can make the tongue of the dumb sing. He delights to look after desperate cases. Man’s extremity becomes His opportunity.

Where the most affectionate words of ours fail, the consolations of His blessed Spirit are divinely efficacious. He cannot merely bring the oil and the wine, but He knows how to pour them into the wounds and heal the anguish of the contrite spirit. I pray the Master that He who alone can teach us to sing this song may graciously instruct those of you who have been seeking rest these many months, and finding none. “I am the Lord which teaches you to profit.” He can put a song into your mouth, for nothing is beyond the range of Divine Grace.

Once more. “In that day you shall say.” Here is another preliminary of the song, namely, the tone of it. “You shall say, O Lord, I will praise You.” The song is to be an open one, avowed, vocally uttered, heard of men and published abroad. It is not to be a silent feeling—a kind of soft music whose sweetness is spent within the spirit. No. In that day you shall say, you shall speak it outright, you shall testify and bear witness to what the Lord has done for you! When a man gets his sins forgiven he cannot help revealing the secret. “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.”

Even if the forgiven one could not speak with his tongue, he could say it with his eyes—his countenance, his manner—his very gait would betray him! The gracious secret would ooze out in some fashion. Spiritual men, at any rate, would find it out, and with thankfulness mark the joyful evidences. I know that before I found the Savior, had you known me, you would have observed my solitary habits. And if you had tracked me to my chamber, and to my Bible, and my knees, you would have heard groans and sighs which betokened a sorrowful spirit. The ordinary amusements of youth had in those days few attractions for me, and conversation, however cheerful, yielded me no comfort.

But that very morning that I heard the Gospel message, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth,” I am certain that no person who knew me could have helped remarking the difference even in my face! A change came over my spirits, which as I remember was even indicated in the way in which I walked, for the heavy step of melancholy was exchanged for a more cheerful pace. The spiritual condition affects the bodily state, and it was evidently so with me. My delight at being forgiven was no ordinary sensation, I could have fairly leaped for joy!—

*“All through the night I wept full sore,
But morning brought relief.
That hand which broke my bones before,
Then broke my bonds of grief.
My mourning He to dancing turns,
For sackcloth joy He gives,
A moment, Lord, Your anger burns,
But long Your favor lives.”*

If I had not avowed my deliverance the very stones must have cried out! It was not in my heart to keep it back, but I am sure I could not have done so if I had desired. God’s Grace does not come into the heart as a beggar into a barn, and lie hidden away as if it stole a night’s lodging. No, its arrival is known all over the house, and every chamber of the soul testifies its presence! Grace is like a bunch of lavender—it discovers itself by its sweet smell. Like the nightingale it is heard where it is not seen. Like a spark which falls into the midst of straw it burns, and blazes, and consumes, and so reveals itself by its own energetic operations.

O Soul, burdened with sin, if Christ does but come to you, and pardon you, I will be bound for it that before long all your bones shall say, “Lord, who is like unto You?” You will be of the same mind as David, “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.” You will gladly say with him, “Your vows are upon me, O God: I will render praise unto You, for You have delivered my soul from death.” Not only will you soberly tell what great things Divine Grace has worked for you, but it will be very unlikely that your exuberant joy may lead you beyond the bounds of solemn decorum.

The precise and slow going will condemn you, but you need not mind, for you can offer the same excuse for it as David made to Michal when he danced before the ark. Far be it from me to condemn you, should you cry, “Hallelujah,” or clap your hands! It is our cold custom to condemn every demonstration of feeling, but I am sure Scripture does not warrant us in our condemnation. For we find such passages as these, “O clap your hands, all you people! Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.” “Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals.” What if the overflowing of holy joy should seem to be disorderly, what matters it if God accepts it? He who has long been in prison, when he gets his liberty may well take a frisk or two, and an extra leap for joy, and who shall begrudge him?

He who has long been hungry and famished, when he sees the table spread, may be excused if he falls to with more of eagerness than politeness. Oh, yes, they shall say it, they shall say it, “I will praise You, O Lord!” In the very disorderliness of their demonstration they shall the more emphatically say, “I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away.” Thus much on the prelude of the song. Now let us hear the song itself.

II. In THE SONG ITSELF I would call to your notice the fact that all of it is concerning the Lord. It is all addressed to Him. “O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry, Your anger is turned away.” When a soul escapes from the bondage of sin and becomes consciously pardoned, it resembles the Apostles on the Mount Tabor, of whom we spoke the other Sunday morning. It sees no man, save Jesus only. While you are seeking Grace you think much of the minister, the service, the outward form—but the moment you find peace in God through the precious blood of Christ—you will think of your pardoning God only.

Oh, how small everything becomes in the presence of that dear Cross where God the Savior loved and died! When we think of all our iniquity being cast into the depth of the sea we can no more boast of anything that was once our glory. The instrumentality by which peace came to us will be always dear to us. We shall esteem the preacher of the Gospel who brings salvation to us to be our spiritual father—but still we shall never think of praising *him*—we shall give all the glory to our God. As for ourselves, self will sink like lead amidst the waters when we find Christ. God will be All in All when iniquity is pardoned.

I have often thought that if some of my Brethren who preach a Gospel in which there is little of the Grace of God had felt a little more conviction of sin in being converted, they would be sure to preach a clearer and more gracious Gospel. Many nowadays appear to leap into peace without any convictions of sin—they do not seem to have known what the guilt of sin means. They scramble into peace before the burden of sin has been felt. It is not for me to judge, but I must confess I have my fears of those who have never felt the terrors of the Lord. And I look upon conviction of sin as a good groundwork for a well-instructed Christian.

I observe, as a rule, that when a man has been put in the prison of the Law. When he has been made to wear the heavy chains of conviction, and at last obtains his liberty through the precious blood of Christ, he is pretty sure to cry up the Grace of God and magnify Divine mercy. He feels that in his case salvation must be of Grace from first to last. And he naturally favors that system of theology which magnifies most the Grace of God. Those who have not felt this—whose conversion has been of the more easy kind, produced rather by excitement than by depth of thought—seem to me to choose a flimsy divinity in which man is more prominent, and God is less regarded.

I am sure of this one thing—that I personally desire to ascribe conversion in my own case entirely to the Grace of God—and to give God the glory of it. And I dread that conversion which could in any degree deprive God of being in His everlasting decrees the cause of it, by His effectual Spirit the direct Agent of it, by His continued working through the Holy Spirit the Perfecter of it. Give God the praise, my Brethren. You must do so if you have thoroughly experienced what God’s anger means, and what the turning away of it means.

The next thing in this song is that it includes repentant memories. “O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me.” There was a time when God was to our consciousness angry with us. When was that? And how did we know that God was angry with us? Outsiders think when we talk about conversion that we are merely talking of sentimental theories. But let me assure you that it is as much matter of *fact* to us with regard to our spiritual nature, as your feelings of sickness and of recovery are real and actual to you. Time was when some of us read the Word of God, as we read it, believing it to be an Inspired Book, we perceived that it contained a Law, holy and just—the breach of which was threatened with eternal death.

As we read it we discovered that we had broken that Law, not in some points, but in *all*. And we were obliged, as we read it, to feel that all the sentences of that Book against sinners were virtually sentences against us. We may perhaps have read these chapters before, but we had given them no serious thought until on this occasion we were led to see that we stood condemned by the Law of God as contained in Holy Scripture. Then we felt that God was angry with us. It was not a mere idea of ours—we had this Book in evidence of it. If that Book were indeed true, we felt we were condemned. We dared not think the old Book to be a cunningly devised fable. We knew it was not, and therefore from its testimony we concluded that God was angry with us.

At the same time we learned this terrible Truth from the Book—our conscience suddenly awoke and confirmed the fact, for it said—“What the Book declares is correct. The just God must be angry with such a sinful being as you are.” Conscience brought to our recollection many things which we would gladly have forgotten. It revealed to us much of the evil of our hearts which we had no wish to know. And thus, as we looked at Scripture by the light of conscience, we concluded in ourselves that we were in a very dreadful plight, and that God was angry with us. Then there entered into us at the same time, over and above all the rest, a certain work of the Holy Spirit called conviction of sin.

“When He, the Spirit of Truth is come,” He shall convict the world of sin. He has come. And He has convicted us of sin in a way in which the Scripture would not have done apart from Him—and our conscience would not have done apart from Him. But His light shone in upon us and we felt as we never felt before. Then sin appeared exceedingly sinful, as it was committed against Infinite Love and goodness. Then it appeared to us as though Hell must soon swallow us up—and the wrath of God must devour us. Oh, the trembling and the fear, the dismay and the alarm which then possessed our spirits! And yet, my Brethren, at this very time, the remembrance of it is cause for thankfulness.

In the Hebrew, the wording of our text is slightly different from what we get in the English. Our English translators have very wisely put in the word “though,” a little earlier than it occurs in the Hebrew. The Hebrew would run something like this, “O Lord, I will praise You: You were angry with me.” Now we do this day praise God that He made us feel His anger. “What?” you say. “What? Is a sense of anger a cause for *praise*?” No, my Brethren, not if it stood alone, but because it has driven us to Christ. If wrath had been laid up for us hereafter, it would be a cause of horror, deep and dread. But that it was let loose in measure upon us here, and that we were thus condemned in conscience that we might not be condemned at last is reason for much thankfulness.

We should never have felt His love if we had not felt His anger. We laid hold on His mercy because of necessity. No soul will accept Christ Jesus until it must. It is not driven to faith until it is driven to self-despair. God’s angry face makes Christ’s loving face dear to us. We would never look at the Christ of God, unless first of all the God of Christ had looked at us through the tempest and made us afraid. “I will praise You, that You did let me feel Your anger, in order that I might be driven to discover how that anger could be turned away.” So you see the song in its deep bass note includes plaintive recollections of sin pressing heavily on the spirit.

The song of our text contains in itself blessed certainties. “I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away.” Can a man know that? Can a man be quite sure that he is forgiven? Yes, that he can. He can be as sure of pardon as he is of his existence, as infallibly certain as he is of a mathematical proposition. “No,” says one, “but how is it?” My Brother, albeit that this is a matter for spiritual men, yet at the same time it is a matter of certainty as clearly as anything can be ascertained by human judgment. The confidence of a man’s being pardoned, and God’s anger being turned away from him is not based upon his merely *feeling* that it is so. Nor his merely *believing* that it is so.

You are not pardoned because you work yourself up into a comfortable frame of mind and *think* you are pardoned. That may be a delusion. You are not necessarily delivered from God’s anger because you believe you are—you may be believing a lie, and may believe what you like—but that does not make it true. There must be a fact going before, and if that fact is not there, you may believe what you choose, but it is pure imagination, nothing more.

On what ground does a man know that God’s anger is turned away? I answer thus, on the ground of this Book. “It is written,” is our basis of assurance. I turn to this Book, and I discover that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this world and became the Substitute for a certain body of men. That He took their sins, and was punished in their place in order that God, without the violation of His justice, might forgive as many as are washed in Christ’s blood. My question then is, for whom did Christ die? The moment I turn to the Scriptures, I find very conspicuously on its page this declaration, that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”

I am a sinner, that I am clear of. That gives me some hope. But I next find that, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Looking to myself I find that I do really believe, that is, I trust Jesus. Very well, then, I am sure I am not condemned, for God has declared I am not. I read again, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” I know that I have believed, that is to say, trusted—I trust my salvation with Christ. And I have also, in obedience to His command been baptized—then I am saved, and shall be saved, for it says so. Now this is a matter of Testimony which I receive. He that believes in Christ receives the Testimony of God—and that is the only Testimony he wants.

I know it has been thought that you get some special revelation in your own soul—some flash, as it were, of light—some extraordinary intimation. But nothing of the kind is absolutely needed. I know that the Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are born of God. But the first essential matter is God’s witness in the Word. “He that believes not God, has made Him a liar, because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son.” God’s witness concerning His Son is this—that if you trust His Son you are saved. His Son suffered for you. His Son bore the punishment that was due for your sins—God declares it—that you are forgiven for Christ’s sake.

He cannot punish twice for one offense—first His Son and then you. He cannot demand retribution from His Law to vindicate His justice, first from your Substitute and then from you. Was Christ your Substitute? That is the question. He was if you trust Him—your trusting Him is the evidence that He was a Substitute for you. Now see, then, the moment I, being under His anger, have come to trust my soul forever in the hands of Christ, God’s anger is turned away from me because it was turned upon Christ. And I stand, guilty sinner as I am in myself, absolved before God—and feel that none can lay anything to my charge, for my sins were laid on Christ, and punished upon Christ—and I am clear.

And now what shall I say unto the Lord, but, “I will praise You: for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.” It is a matter of certainty. It is not a matter of “if,” “and,” or “but.” It is a fact. This morning you are either forgiven or you are not. You are either clean in God’s sight or else the wrath of God abides on you. And I beseech you, do not rest till you know which it is. If you find out that you are unforgiven, seek the Savior. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” But if you believe in Him, you are no longer guilty—you are forgiven. Do not sit down and fret as if you were guilty, but enjoy the liberty of the children of God. Being justified by faith, have peace with God through Jesus Christ your Lord.

Time fails me, but I must add that our song includes holy resolutions—“I will praise You.” I will do it with my heart in secret. I will get alone and make my expressive silence sing Your praise. I will sit and pour out liquid songs in tears of gratitude, welling up from my heart. I will praise You in the Church of God, for I will search out other Believers, and I will tell them what God has done for me. I will cast in my lot with Your people—if they are despised, I will bear the shame with them—and count it honor. I will unite myself to them, and help them in their service. And if I can magnify Christ by my testimony among them, I will do it.

I will praise You in my life. I will make my business praising You. I will make my parlor and my drawing room, I will make my kitchen and my fields praise You. I will not be content unless all I am and all I have shall praise You. I will make a harp of the whole universe. I will make earth and Heaven, space and time to be but strings upon which my joyful fingers shall play lofty tunes of thankfulness. I will praise You, O my God! My heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise—and when I shall die, or rather pass from this life to another, I who have been forgiven so much sin through such a Savior, will, by Your Grace, continue to praise You—

*“Oh, how I long to join the choir
Who worship at His feet!
Lord, grant me soon my heart’s desire!
Soon, soon Your work complete!”*

Note once more that this is a song which is peculiar in its character, and appropriate only to the people of God. I may say of it, “no man could learn this song but the redeemed.” He only who has felt his vileness, and has had it washed away in the “fountain filled with blood,” can know its sweetness. It is not a Pharisee’s song—it has no likeness to, “God I thank You that I am not as other men.” It confesses, “You were angry with me,” and there owns that the singer was even as others. But it glories that through infinite mercy the Divine anger is turned away. And herein it leans on the appointed Savior.

It is not a Sadducean song, no doubt mingles with the strain. It is not the philosopher’s query, “There may be a God, or there may not be,” it is the voice of a believing worshipper. It is not, “I may be guilty, or I may not be.” It is all posi-

tive, every note of it. “You were angry with me.” I know it, I feel it, yet, “Your anger is turned away.” Of this, too, I am sure. I believe it upon the witness of God! I cannot doubt His Word. It is a song of strong faith, and yet of humility. Its spirit is a precious incense made up of many costly ingredients. We have, here, not one virtue, alone, but many rare excellences.

Humility confesses, “You were angry with me.” Gratitude sings, “Your anger is turned away.” Patience cries, “You comfort me,” and holy joy springs up, and says, “I will praise You.” Faith, hope, and love all have their notes here, from the bass of humility up to the highest alto of glorious communion, all the different parts are represented. It is a full song—the swell of the diapason of the heart!

I have done when I have said just these words by way of practical result from the subject. One is a word of consolation—consolation to you who are under God’s anger this morning. My heart goes out after you. I know what your sorrow is. I knew it by the space of five years at a time—when I mourned the guilt and curse of sin. Ah, poor Soul, you are in a sad plight, indeed. But be of good cheer! You have in your bosom, if you will believe me, a key which will open every lock in Doubting Castle wherein you are now confined. If, Man, you have but heart to take it out of your bosom, and out of the Word of God—and use it—liberty is near.

I will show you that key—look at it, “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” “Oh, but that does not happen to fit,” you say. Well, here’s another—“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin.” Does not that meet your case? Then let me try again—“He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” “To the uttermost”—dwell on that and be comforted! I never knew God to shut a soul up in the prison of conviction but He sooner or later released the captive. The Lord will surely bring you out of the low dungeon of conviction. The worst thing in the world is to go unchastened—to be allowed to sin and eat honey with it—this is the precursor of damnation.

But to sin, and have the wormwood of repentance with it—this is the prelude of being saved! If the Lord has embittered your sin, He has designs of love towards you. His anger shall yet be turned away. “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them. I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”

The next is a word of admonition. Some of you have been forgiven, but are you praising God as you should? I have heard say that in our Churches there are no more than five per cent who are doing any real work for Christ. That is not true of *this* Church. I should be very sorry if it were, but I fear there are more than five per cent who are doing *nothing*. Where are you who have felt His anger pass away, and yet are not praising Him? Come, bestir yourself, bestir yourself! Seek to serve Jesus! Do you not know that you are meant to be the winners of souls?

The American bee keeper, when he wants to collect a hive, catches first a single bee. He puts it in a box with a piece of honeycomb and shuts the door. After awhile, when it is well fed, he lets it out. It comes back again after more of the sweet, but it brings companions with it. And when they have eaten the honey they always bring yet a more numerous band, so by-and-by there is a goodly muster for the hive. After this fashion ought *you* to act. If you have found mercy, you ought to praise God and tell others, so that they may believe. And in their turn lead others to Jesus. This is the way the kingdom of God grows.

I am afraid you are guilty here. See to it, dear Brother. See to it, dear Sister—and who can tell of what use you may yet be? There was a dear servant of Christ who was just on the borders of the grave, very old and very ill, and frequently delirious, so that the doctors said no one must go into the chamber except the nurse. A little Sunday school boy, who was rather curious, peeped in at the door to look at the minister, and the poor dying servant of God saw him, and the ruling passion was strong in death. He called him. “David,” said he, “did you ever close in with Christ? I have done so many a time, and I long that you may.” Fifty years after, that boy was living and bearing testimony that the dying words of the good man had brought him to Jesus—for by them he was led to close in with Christ.

You do not know what half a word might do if you would but speak it! O keep not back the good news that might bring salvation to your wife, to your husband, to your child, to your servant! If you have, indeed, felt the Lord’s anger pass away this morning, go home to your chamber, and on your knees repeat this vow, “My God, I will praise You! I have been a sluggard, I have been very silent about You. I am afraid I have not given You of my substance as I ought. I am sure I have not given You of my heart as I should. But oh, forgive the past, and accept Your poor servant yet again. ‘Then I will praise You. For though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.’”

God bless you, for Christ’s sake.