

THE DUMB BECOME SINGERS

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*“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 35:6

WHAT a difference grace makes whenever it enters the heart! We find here the blind, but they are not blind in one sense, grace has touched their eyes, and the eyes of the blind are opened. Men are said to be deaf, but they are not deaf after grace has operated upon them, the ears of the deaf are unstopped. They have been lame before, but when once the omnipotent influence has come upon them, they leap like a hart. And the dumb, so far from being dumb, have a change that must be radical, for its effects are surprising. The tongue of the dumb not simply speaks, but it sings.

Grace makes a great difference in man when it enters into him. How vain then, are the boasts and professions of some persons who assert themselves to be the children of God, and yet live in sin! There is no perceivable difference in their conduct, they are just what they used to be before their pretended conversion, they are not changed in their acts, even in the least degree, and yet they do most positively affirm that they are the called and living children of God.

Let such know that their professions are lies, that falsehood is the only groundwork that they have for their hopes, for wherever the grace of God is, it makes a difference. A graceless man is not like a gracious man, and a gracious man is not like a graceless one, we are “new creatures in Christ Jesus.” When God looks upon us with the eye of love, in conversion and regeneration, He makes us as opposite from what we were before as light is from darkness—as heaven itself is from hell. God works in man a change so great that no reformation can even so much as thoroughly imitate it.

It is an entire change—a change of the will, of the being, of the desires, of the hates, of the dislikings, and of the likings. In every respect the man becomes new when divine grace enters into his heart. And yet you say of yourself, “I am converted,” and remain what you were! I tell you once again to your face, you say an empty thing, you have no grounds for saying it.

If grace permits you to sin as you were wont to do, then that grace is no grace at all. That grace were not worth the having which permits a man to be, after he receives it, what he was before. No, we must ever hold fast to the great doctrine of sanctification. Where God really justifies, He really sanctifies too, and where there is a remission of sin, there is also the forsaking of it. Where God has blotted out transgression, He also removes the love of it, and makes us seek after holiness, and walk in the ways of the Lord. We think we might fairly infer this from the text as a prelude to the observations we have to make concerning it.

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

First, then—

I. “THE TONGUE OF THE DUMB SHALL SING.” We make this the first point.

Note the persons whom God has chosen to sing His songs forever. 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 with robes of purity, were by nature as unholy and 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 a punishment for their sins. The only reason why there is a difference between those who are in heaven and those who are in hell, rests with divine grace, and with divine grace alone.

Those in heaven must inevitably have been cast away had not everlasting mercy stretched out its hand and redeemed them. They were by nature not one whit superior to others. They would as certainly have rejected Christ, and have trodden underfoot the blood of Jesus as did those who were cast away, if grace, free grace, had not prevented them from committing this 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, but they are now saints simply because Christ made them so. He gave them the desire to be saved, He put into them the will to seek after God, He helped them in their seekings, and afterwards brought them to feel the peace of God, 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 lies on the wrong side of the question. In very many cases we who now “rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,” were the worst of men.

There are some here that now bless God for their redemption who once cursed Him, who implored, as frequently as they dared to do, with oaths and swearing, 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, those whom no man cared for, called outcasts, whom God has now called desired ones, seeing He has loved them.

I am led to these thoughts from the fact that we are told here that those who sing were dumb. Their singing does not come naturally from themselves, they were not born songsters. No, they were dumb ones, those whom God would have to sing His praises. It does not say the tongue of the stammerer, or the tongue of him that blasphemed, or the tongue of him that misused his tongue, but the tongue of the dumb, of those who have gone farthest from any thought of singing, of those who have no power of will to sing, the tongue of such as these shall yet be made to sing God’s praises.

Strange choice that God has made, strange for its graciousness, strangely manifesting the sovereignty of His will! God would build for Himself a palace in heaven of living stones. Where did He get them? Did He go to the quarries of Paros? Has He brought forth the richest and the purest marble from the quarries of perfection?

No, you saints, look to “the hole of the pit from whence ye were digged,” and to the quarry from whence ye were hewn! You were full of sin, so far from being stones that were white with purity, you were black with defilement, seemingly utterly unfit to be made stones in the spiritual temple which should be the dwelling place of the Most High. And yet He chose you to be trophies of His grace and of His power to save.

When Solomon built for himself a palace, he built it of cedar, but when God would build for Himself a dwelling forever, He cut not down the goodly cedars, but He dwelt in a bush, and has preserved it as His memorial forever, “The God that dwelt in the bush.” Goldsmiths make exquisite forms from precious material, they fashion the bracelet and the ring from gold, God makes His precious things out of base material, and from the black pebbles of the defiling brooks He has taken up stones, which He has set in the golden ring of His immutable love, to make them 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 should with tongues harmoniously sing His praise—when He would have a chorus that should forever chant the hallelujahs louder than the sound of many waters and like great thunders, He did not send mercy down to seek earth’s songsters and cull from us those who have the sweetest voices, He said, “Go, mercy, and find out the dumb, and touch their lips, and make them sing.

The virgin tongues that never sang My praise before, that have been silent erst till now, shall break forth in rhapsodies sublime, 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.” “The tongue of the dumb shall sing” His praises hereafter.

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

*“Depths of mercy can there be,
Mercy still reserved for me?”*

How many times we have sung at the Lord’s table—the sacramental supper of our Master—

*“Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there’s room,
While others make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come.”*

And we have joined in singing—

*“’Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That gently forced us in;
Else we had still refused to take,
And perished in our sin.”*

Grace is always grace, but it never seems so gracious as when we see it brought to our unworthy selves. You are obliged to confess that it is of grace then, and cast away the thoughts that it was of your foreseen faith, or of your foreseen good works, that the Lord chose you. We are obliged to come to this, 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 preventing us before good works, and without His grace also in good works enabling us to do them, and therefore they never could have been the motive to divine love, nor the reason why it flowed towards us.

Oh! 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 impediments which Adam cast upon you, your tongue is loosed, it is loose now, Adam made it dumb, but God has loosened it, your eyes that were blinded by Adam’s fall are opened now, He has lifted you from the miry clay. What Adam lost for us, Christ has regained for us, He has plucked us out of the pit, and “set us upon a rock, and established our goings, and hath put a new song in our mouth, even praise for evermore.” Yes, “the tongue of the dumb shall sing.”

Just another hint here before I leave this point. How this ought to give you encouragement in seeking to do good to others! Why, my brethren, I can never think any man too far gone for divine mercy to save, since I know that God saved me. Whenever I have felt desponding 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 just think what I too was till grace redeemed 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 He has done for me, I can believe anything of my Master.

If He has blotted out *my* transgressions, if He has clean melted away my sin, then I can never despair of any of my fellow creatures. I may for myself, but I cannot for them.” Remember, 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 heart. Your daughter’s heart seems hard as adamant, He who makes the dumb sing

can make rocks melt. Believe in God for your children as well as for yourselves—trust Him, take their cases before the throne, rely upon Him that He can do it, and believe that in answer to earnest prayer He also will do it.

And if you have neighbors that 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 be harlots, drunkards, swearers, be not afraid to tell them of the Savior's dying love. He makes the dumb sing, He does not ask even a voice of them to begin with, they are dumb, and He does not ask of them even the power of speech, but He gives them the power.

Oh if you have neighbors who are haters of the Sabbath, haters of God, unwilling to come to the house of God, despising Christ, if you find them as far gone as you can find them, recollect He makes the dumb sing, and therefore He can make them live. He wants no goodness in them to begin with, all He wants is just the rough, raw material—unhewn, uncut, unpolished. And He does not want even good material, bad as the material may be, He can make it into something inestimably precious, something that is worthy of the Savior's blood. Go on—fear not, if the dumb can sing, then surely you can never say that any man need be a castaway. Now I am to enter into some rather more lucid description of these dumb people.

II. WHO ARE THESE DUMB ONES?

Well, sometimes I get a good thought out of old Master Cruden's Concordance. I believe that is the best commentary to the Bible, and I like to study it. I opened it at this passage, and I found Master Cruden describing different kinds of dumb people. He says there are four or five different sorts, but I shall name only four of them. The first sort of dumb people he mentions are those that cannot speak, the second sort are those that won't speak, the third sort are those that dare not speak, and the fourth sort are those that have got nothing to say, and therefore are dumb.

The first sort of people who shall sing are *those who cannot speak*—that is the usual acceptance 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 his trespasses and sins is dumb, and I will prove that. He is dead, and there is none so dumb as a dead man. "Shall the dead arise and praise thee? Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction?" The Word of God assures us that 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 confess their sins, they can utter the mere 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, and to know themselves as sinners.

But "no man can call Jesus Lord, except by the Holy Ghost," and these people cannot do so truly. Perhaps it may be, they can talk well of the doctrines, but they cannot speak them out of the fullness of their hearts, as living and vital principles which they know in themselves. They cannot join in the songs, nor can they take part in the conversation of a Christian.

If they sit down with the saints, perhaps they have culled a few phrases from the garden of the Lord, which they use and apply to certain things of which they do not know anything. They talk a language, the meaning of which they do not comprehend—like Milton's daughters reading a language to their father which they did not understand—still, so far as the essence of the matter is concerned, they 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 yet do it, they will not now confess their sins, but He will bring them on their knees yet and make them pour out their hearts before Him. They cannot now talk the speech of Canaan, and utter 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 be made to sing to the praise of sovereign grace.

I need not dwell upon that point because I have many here who were dumb once, who can bless God that they can now sing. And does it not sometimes seem to you, beloved, a very strange thing that you are what you are? I should think it must be the strangest thing 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. Like a man blind from birth, he has no idea what kind of a thing sight can be. We have heard of a blind man who supposed that the color scarlet must be very much like the sound of a trumpet—he had no other way of comparing it. So the dumb man has no notion of the way to talk.

Do you not think that 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? No.” 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 give up all argument about things, and simply take them for granted because God has said them? Nay, that never can be!” I will be bound to say it will be a wonder to you as long as you are here, that you are the children of God, and even in heaven itself, the greatest wonder you will know will be that you were brought to know the Savior.

But there is a sort of dumb *people that will not speak*. They are mentioned by Isaiah. He said of preachers in his day, they were “dumb dogs that would not bark.” I bless God we are not now quite so much inundated by this kind of dumb people as we used to be. We have had to mourn, especially in years gone by, that we could look from parish to parish, and find nobody but a dumb dog in the church, and in the pulpits of dissenters too.

And some men who might have spoken with a little earnestness if they liked, let the people slumber under them, instead of preaching the Word with true fidelity, as they would if they remembered that they would have to give an account to God at the last.

My grandfather used to tell a story 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.” To which he replied, “My good woman, what do you come to me about that for? Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, did not know, he was a wise man, and how do you think I should know?” So she had to go away with only that answer.

Time was when such an answer might have been given by a great many who were reckoned to be the authorized teachers of religion, but knew nothing at all about the matter. They understood a great deal more about fox-hunting than about preaching, and more about farming their land than about the spiritual husbanding 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 thoroughly extinct, that every pulpit and every place of worship may be filled with a man who has a tongue of fire and a heart of flame, and shuns not to declare the whole counsel of God, neither seeking the smile of men, nor dreading their frown. We have a promise that it shall be so—“The tongue of the dumb shall sing.” And ah! they do sing well too, when God makes them sing.

You remember Rowland Hill’s story in “The Village Dialogs,” about Mr. Merriman? Mr. Merriman was a sad scapegrace of a preacher, he was to be seen at every fair and revel, but used to be seldom found in his pulpit when he should have been, but when he was converted, he began to preach with tears running down his face—and how the church began to be crowded!

The squire would not go and hear any of that stuff, and locked up his pew, and so Mr. Merriman had a little ladder made outside the door, as he did not wish to break the door open, and the people used to sit on the steps, up one side and down the other, so that it made twice as much room as there was before. No people make such good preachers as those who were dumb once. If the Lord opens their mouths, they will think they cannot preach often enough and 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 his parish immoral, he kept on urging the people to keep God's law, till he made them break it, but when he turned round and began to preach God's Gospel, then the dumb began to sing.

Oh! may God bring this about 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 skirts, and we should be cast away as unfaithful stewards of the Gospel of Christ.

I will now introduce you to a third sort of dumb people. They are *dumb because they dare not speak*, and they are good people, blessed souls. Here is one of them, "I was dumb with silence; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." And it is so blessed to be dumb in that fashion. The Lord's servant will often have to be dumb under trial and troubles. When Satan tempts him to repine, he will put his finger to his lip, and say, "Hush murmuring, be still, shall a living man complain of the punishment of his sins?"

Even the child of God will do like Job did, who sat down for seven days and nights and said not a word, for he felt that his trouble was heavy, and he could say nothing. It would have been as well if Job had kept his mouth shut for the next few days, he would not have said so much amiss as he did in many things that he uttered.

Oh! there are times when you and I, beloved, are obliged to keep the bridle on our tongue, lest we should murmur against God. We are in evil company, perhaps, our spirits are hot within us, and we want to take vengeance for the Lord, we are like the friends of David who wanted to take away the head of Shimei. "Let us take this dead dog's head," we say, and then our Jesus tells us to put our sword into its scabbard, "the servant of the Lord must not strive."

How often have we been dumb. And sometimes when there have been slanders against our character, and men have calumniated us, oh! how our fingers have itched to be at them. We have wanted to see who was the stronger of the two. But we have said, "No, our Master did not answer, and He left us an example that we should follow in His steps." The chief priests accused Him of many things, but He "answered them not a word."

Well, we have found it hard sometimes to be dumb like the sheep when it is brought to the shearer, or the lamb when it is in the slaughterhouse, we could not keep quiet. And 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 weights of 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 in the deepest trouble now, and are obliged to be silent, you shall sing yet.

Though like Jonah, you are in the whale's belly, carried down, as he called it, to the lowest hell, though the earth with her bars is about you forever, and the weeds are wrapped about your head, yet you "shall look again towards his holy temple." Though you have laid your harp upon the willows—bless God you have not broken it—you will have use for it by and by—you shall take it from its resting place and—

*"Loud to the praise of sovereign grace
Bid every string awake."*

If you have no "songs in the night," yet He shall "compass you about with songs of deliverance," if you cannot sing His praises now, yet you shall do so by and by, when greater grace shall have come 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 with affliction, we are bound to sing. And I

think we ought to sing even when we ought to be dumb, though we are dumb as to murmuring, we ought to sing God's praises.

An old Puritan said, "God's people are like birds, they sing best in cages." He said, "God's people sing best when in the deepest trouble." Said old Master Brooks, "The deeper the flood was, the higher the ark went up to heaven." So it is with the child of God, the deeper his troubles, the nearer to heaven he goes, if he lives close to his Master.

Troubles are called weights, and a weight, you know, generally clogs and keeps 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 making them sink you.

Ah! we thank our God, He 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 bless Him, when He sent a sharp affliction, then we began to bless Him. He has thus made the tongue of the dumb to sing.

We have one more kind of dumb people. There are *those who have nothing to say, therefore they are dumb*. I will give you an instance, Solomon says in the Proverbs, "Open thy 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 have to 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 camest thou in hither?" he stood speechless, speechless not because he could not speak, but because he had nothing to say.

Have not you and I been dumb, and are we not now, 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 made bare before us, and when the law of God is brought home to the 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 we were asked, "Sinner, can you claim to have kept those commandments?" and we were dumb. Then we were asked, "Sinner, can you give any atonement for the breach of these commandments?" and we were dumb. We were asked, "Sinner, can you, by a future obedience, wipe out your past sin?" We knew it was impossible and we were dumb. Then we were asked, "Can you endure the penalty? can you dwell with everlasting burnings, and abide with eternal fires?" and we were dumb. And 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 any one that can deliver you?" and we were dumb, for we had nothing to say. Ay, but blessed be God, "the tongue of the dumb shall now sing." And shall I tell you what we can sing? Why, we can sing this, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of the Lord's elect?" "Not God, for he hath justified." "Who is he that condemneth?" not Christ, "He hath died, yea, rather hath risen again, who is also at the right hand of God, and makes intercession for us." We who had not a word to say for ourselves, can now say everything.

If God has made you dumb, if He has taken away all your self-righteousness, 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. 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 to fill it with His praise. Be of good cheer, look to Jesus, cast your eyes to the cross, put your confidence in Him, and then you who think yourself a castaway, even you, poor weeping Mary, shall yet sing of redeeming, undying love.

And now I have to conclude, by just noticing—

III. THE OCCASIONS WHEN THE TONGUES OF THESE DUMB PEOPLE SINGS THE BEST.

What 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 this world is a howling wilderness, well, you are the howlers, who make all the howling. If you choose to howl, I cannot help it.

I shall prefer the matter of my text, “Then shall the tongue of the dumb,” not howl, but “sing.” Yes, they do 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, they first begin to sing, *when they lose their burden at the foot of the cross*, that is a time of singing.

You know how John Bunyan describes it. He says when poor Pilgrim 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, we have leaped many times since then with joy and gratitude, but we think we never leaped so high as we did at the time when we saw our sins all gone, and our transgressions covered up in the tomb of the Savior.

By the way, let me tell you a little story about John Bunyan. I am a great lover of John Bunyan, but I do not believe him infallible, for I met with a story the other day which I think is a very good one. There was a young man in Edinburgh who wished to be a missionary. He was a wise young man, he thought, “Well, if I am to be a missionary, there is no need for me to transport myself far away from home, I may as well be a missionary in Edinburgh.” (That’s a hint to some of you ladies who give away tracts in your district, and never give your servant Mary one).

Well, this young man started, and determined to speak to the first person he met. He met one of those old fishwives, those of us who have seen them, can never forget them, they are extraordinary women indeed. So, stepping up to her, he said, “Here you are, coming with your burden on your back, let me ask you if you have got another burden, a spiritual burden?”

“What!” she said, “Do you mean that burden in John Bunyan’s ‘Pilgrim’s Progress?’ Because if you do, young man, I have got rid of that many years ago, before you were born. But I went a better way to work than the pilgrim did. The evangelist that John Bunyan talks about was one of your parsons that do not preach the Gospel, for he said, ‘Keep that light in thine eye and run to the wicket gate.’ Why, man alive! that was not the place for him to run to. He should have said, ‘Do you see that cross? Run there at once!’ But instead of that, he sent the poor pilgrim to the wicket gate first, and much good he got by going there!—He got tumbling into the slough, and was like to have been killed by it.”

“But did you,” he asked, “go through any slough of despond?” “Yes, young man, I did, but I found it a great deal easier going through with my burden off, than with it on my back.” The old woman was quite right. We must not say to the sinner, “Now, sinner, if you will be saved, go to the baptismal pool—go to the wicket gate—go to the church—do this or that.”

No, the cross should be right in front of the wicket gate, and we should say to the sinner, “Throw yourself there, and you are safe. But you are not safe till you can cast off your burden, and lie at the foot of the cross and find peace in Jesus.” Well, that is a singing time with God’s children!

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! Those are singing times, when the heart is lifted up to feel its oneness to Christ, and its vital union with Him, and is enabled to “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Have you not had some precious singing times too, *at the Lord’s table*? Ah, when the bread has been broken, and the wine poured out, how often have I had a song! when the people have all joined in singing—

*“Gethsemane, can I forget,
Or there the conflict see,
Thine agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember Thee?”*

*When to the cross I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,*

*Oh! Lamb of God, my sacrifice,
I must remember Thee.”*

But lastly, my dear friends, the best singing time we shall have will be *when you and I come to die*. Ah, there are some of you that are like what is fabled of the swan. The ancients said the swan never sang in his lifetime, but always sang just when he died. Now, there are many of God’s desponding children who seem to go all their life under a cloud, but they get a swan’s song before they die. The river of your 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 last, we shall find swan songs. Are you afraid of dying? Oh, never be afraid of that, be afraid of living. Living is the only thing that can do any 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, that she might be fit for her lord.

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 fled. 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 song we make now. When we join the song—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 that have gone further astray than anybody that ever lived, the most extraordinary extravaganzas of vice, just to make the melody complete by singing some of those soprano notes which you and I, because we have not gone so far astray, will never be able to utter. I wonder whether one has stepped in hither, whom God has selected to take some of those alto notes in the scale of praise? Perhaps there is one such here. Oh, how will such a one sing, if grace—free grace—shall have mercy upon him! May there be many such. Amen!

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.