

The Ninety And Nine

By
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The great evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, and his song leader, Ira Sankey, were holding meetings in the British Isles. On board a train from Glasgow to Edinburgh, Scotland, Mr. Sankey discovered a poem in a newspaper. At the time, Sankey was looking for a shepherd hymn; and this seemed to fit the bill. The title of the poem was “The Ninety and Nine.” The author was a young lady by the name of Elizabeth Clephane—daughter of the sheriff of Fifeshire, Scotland, and a devoted Christian. It would be years later that Sankey discovered that she had written it about her prodigal brother.

The meetings in Edinburgh proved to be very successful. Moody would preach, and Sankey would close with a special song. One night, Dr. Horatius Bonar was the guest speaker. His subject was “The Good Shepherd.” Sankey knew he would have to close the meeting, but he didn’t have a song. Then, he remembered the poem that he had saved from the newspaper days before. Reaching in his coat pocket, he unfolded the paper and put it on the little pump organ that he carried with him.

Sankey didn’t have any music to accompany the poem that night in Edinburgh in 1874, but a voice seemed to say, “Sing that hymn.” That he did—composing the song right on the spot. Touching the keys, the notes came to him one by one, until, finally, the whole tune was written as it is sung today.

The words of Elizabeth Clephane have been preserved for us because of the music. This young lady, of twenty-one, knew too well the heartache a prodigal can give. To ease the pain, she wrote a poem. To save the poem, God gave a song. To be blessed by the song, we need to sing the hymn. All of us, at one time or another, will feel the pain that an empty heart can give. There is solace and relief in these great hymns of the faith. Why not find *The Ninety and Nine* and see if the Lord has a message for you? In the words of Elizabeth, “Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!”

There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold; But one was out on
The hills away Far off from the gates of gold,
Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd’s care,
Away from the tender Shepherd’s care.

And all through the mountains, thunder- riven,
And up from the rocky steep, There rose
A cry to the gate of heaven, “Rejoice, I have found
My sheep!” And the angels echoed
Around the throne, “Rejoice, for the Lord brings back
His own, Rejoice for the Lord
Brings back His own.”

Read Romans 8:28-39