

“Prayer for Those Convinced of Sin” (1743)¹

[cf. Baker list, #73]

Editorial Introduction:

Early Methodism understood itself as an instrument for helping those on the “way of salvation,” not an exclusive gathering of the saved. The way this was expressed in the *General Rules*, the foundational document for the movement, was that the sole condition required to join the Methodists was “a desire to flee the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.” The *General Rules* then describe the set of practices in which Methodists embodied this desire.

From its earliest edition there was a hymn appended to the *General Rules* titled “A Prayer for those who are Convinced of Sin.” This hymnic prayer gave voice to the longing that was so central to Methodist identity. While it is unsigned, Charles Wesley’s authorship is confirmed by its presence in MS Thirty, 57–59; and its inclusion in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1749), 2:89–91.

Editions:

[Charles Wesley.] “Prayer for those who are convinced of Sin.” Appended to John Wesley’s *Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies...* Newcastle: Gooding, 1743.
[over 20 edns. during Wesley’s life; hymn in almost all editions, no variants]

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A Prayer for Those who are Convinced of Sin.

- 1 O most compassionate high priest,
Full of all grace we know thou art,
Faith puts its hand² upon thy breast,
And feels beneath thy panting heart.
- 2 Thy panting heart for sinners bleeds;
Thy mercies and compassions move;
Thy groaning Spirit intercedes,
And yearn the bowels of thy love.
- 3 Hear then the pleading Spirit's prayer,
(The Spirit's will to thee is known)
For all who now thy sufferings share,
And still for full redemption groan.
- 4 Poor tempted souls, with tempests tossed,
And strangers to a moment's peace;
Disconsolate, afflicted, lost,
Lost in a³ howling wilderness.
- 5 Torn with an endless war within,
Vexed with the flesh and Spirit's strife,
And struggling in the toils of sin,
And agonizing into life.
- 6 O let the pris'ners mournful cries,
As incense in thy sight appear;
Their humble wailings pierce the skies,
If haply they may feel thee near!
- 7 The captive exiles make their moans,
From sin impatient to be free;
Call home, call home thy banished ones!
Lead captive their captivity!
- 8 Show them the blood that bought their peace,
The anchor of their steadfast hope;
And bid their guilty terrors cease,
And bring the ransomed pris'ners up.
- 9 Out of the deep regard their cries,
The fallen raise, the mourners cheer;
O Sun of Righteousness arise,
And scatter all their doubt and fear!

²“Hand” changed to “hands” in *HSP* (1749).

³“A” changed to “an” in *HSP* (1749).

- 10 Pity the day of feeble things;
O gather every halting soul,
And drop salvation from thy wings,
And make the contrite sinner whole.
- 11 Stand by them in the fiery hour,
Their feebleness of mind defend;
And in their weakness show thy power,
And make them patient to the end.
- 12 O satisfy their soul in drought;
Give them thy saving health to see,
And let thy mercy find them out;
And let thy mercy reach to me.
- 13 Hast thou the work of grace begun,
And brought them to the birth in vain?
O let thy children see the sun!
Let all their souls be born again.
- 14 Relieve the souls whose cross we bear,
For whom thy suff'ring members mourn;
Answer our faith's effectual prayer:
Bid every struggling child be born.
- 15 Hark how thy turtle dove complains,
And see us weep for Sion's woe!
Pity thy suff'ring people's pains;
Avenge us of our inbred foe.
- 16 Whom thou has bound, O Lord, expel,
And take his armour all away;
The man of sin, the child of hell,
The devil in our nature slay.
- 17 Him and his works at once destroy,
The *being* of all sin erase,
And turn our mourning into joy,
And clothe us with the robes of praise.
- 18 Then, when our suff'rings all are past,
O let us pure and perfect be,
And gain our calling's prize at last,
Forever sanctified in thee.