

The Ninety and Nine

Burl Ives

There were ninety-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 mountain wild and bare
Away from the tender Shepherd's care
Away from the tender Shepherd's care

"Lord, thou hast here thy ninety-nine
Are they not enough for thee?"
But the Shepherd made answer:
"This of mine has wandered away from me
Although the road be rough and steep
I go to the desert to find my sheep
I go to the desert to find my sheep"

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere he found his sheep that was lost
Out in the desert he heard its cry
So sick and helpless, and ready to die
So sick and helpless, and ready to die

"Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way
That mark out the mountain's track?"
"They were shed for one who had gone astray
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back"
"Lord, whence are thy hands so rent and torn?"
"They're pierced tonight by many a thorn
They are pierced tonight by many a thorn"

But all through the mountains, thunder-riv'n
And up from the rocky steep
There arose a glad cry to the gates of heaven
"Rejoice! I have found my sheep!"
And the angels echoed round the throne
"Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!
Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!"