

TAKE MY LIFE, AND LET IT BE

Frances Ridley Havergal

Frances Ridley Havergal was born on 14th December 1836 in Astley, Worcestershire where her father (William Henry Havergal) was the rector. He was also a hymnwriter and musician. Indeed, it was from her father she inherited her musical ability. He wrote the music to eight of the hymns in *Christian Hymns*, including “Let earth and heaven combine, angels and men agree” ... and he also composed the music (‘Baca’) to the hymn his daughter wrote,

Thy life was given for me,
Thy blood, O Lord, was shed,
That I might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
Thy life was given for me,
What have I given for Thee?

In fact, she sang this hymn on her deathbed ... to the tune her father wrote.

The youngest of six children, she was a bright little girl, full of life and energy, - words used to describe her were ‘highly-strung’, ‘excitable’, ‘exuberant’. She was the type watching her would have tired you out! And she was extremely clever, for example, she started reading when she was only three years old. She was reading the Bible at four, and she began writing with very little tutoring. As a child, she learned French, and she loved music! She also loved her ‘middle’ name, - Ridley, - for it was after Bishop Ridley who was burned at the stake in Oxford during Queen Mary’s reign in 1555. When she was only seven, - just to show the kind of mind she had, - she wrote these verses,

Sunday is a pleasant day
When we to church do go;
For there we sing and read and pray,
And hear the sermon too.

And if we love to pray and read
While we are in our youth,
The Lord will help us in our need
And keep us in His truth.

In fact, one of her problems was she was *too* clever ... advanced beyond her years. She had studied English, German, French, Hebrew, Latin, and Welsh by the time she was fourteen. She found it difficult coping in a ‘normal’ school. Her mother had died when she was only twelve. When she was sixteen she

attended a boarding school, and it was there, - even though she always had a Christian mindset, - she confided in a friend how she longed to know her sins forgiven ... and the friend led her to the Lord.

Also, when she was sixteen, her father remarried. Because his health was not too good, he, his new wife, and the two girls moved temporarily to Germany so he could undergo tests and examinations. On returning to England, her father taught her Greek so she should could read the New Testament in the original ... and she also wrote poems in the German language. In 1856, her older sister married and moved to Ireland. Frances visited them, and was drawn into their evangelistic work, and learned the Gaelic language ... and when she returned to England, she began to use her Gaelic to teach the Irish how to read the Bible in their own language. ... She was happiest when she was busiest!

Her dad's health deteriorated though, so they moved to a smaller parish, in a little country village called Shareshill, a few miles outside of Wolverhampton ... and that is where he died.

Frances Havergal's life changed after that. She missed her father so much, so she became busier ... she began teaching Bible classes and visiting all over area. However, she suffered a series of breakdowns for she was so highly strung. After her step-mother died, she and her sister went to live in the Mumbles, near Swansea. There is a plaque on a house near Caswell Bay identifying where she lived and died, and there is a street named after her in Swansea, Havergal Close.

She caught a chill, there were added complications, and she developed inflammation of the lungs, peritonitis. Her brother Frank, - with whom she was very close, - sat with her as she approached death. Only a few minutes before her death, she sang clearly, though faintly, the first verse of her hymn,

Jesus, I will trust Thee,
Trust Thee with my soul;
Guilty, lost and helpless,
Thou canst make me whole:

There is none in Heaven,
Or on earth like Thee:
Thou hast died for sinners –
Therefore, Lord, for me.

Shortly after she finished, at 1 am on 3rd June 1839, she closed her eyes and gently passed into the presence of the Lord. She is buried in Astley, where she was born. She is buried beside her mother and father, and on her tomb stone is written the words she asked to be inscribed, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John 1:7”. (*There is an excellent story of her life, including pictures, at <http://daibach-welldigger.blogspot.co.uk/2016/03/the-influence-of-wales-on-frances.html>*)

Probably one of her best-known hymns is ...

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
 Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise.
 Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love.
 Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing always, only, for my King.
 Take my lips, and let them be filled with messages from Thee.
 Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold.
 Take my intellect, and use every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it Thine; it shall be no longer mine.
 Take my heart, it is Thine own; it shall be Thy royal throne.
 Take my love, my Lord, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store.
 Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee.

She wrote this hymn at the home of a Mr. & Mrs. Rogers at Arely House in Stourport. The date was 4th February 1874. She recorded in her diary, “I went for a little visit of five days to Areley House. There were ten persons in the house, some unconverted and long prayed for, some converted, but not rejoicing Christians. He gave me the prayer, “Lord, give me all in this house!” And He just did. Before I left the house everyone had got a blessing. The last night of my visit after I had retired, the governess asked me to go to the two daughters. They were crying, &c.; then and there both of them trusted and rejoiced; it was nearly midnight. I was too happy to sleep, and passed most of the night in praise and renewal of my own consecration; and these little couplets formed themselves, and chimed in my heart one after another till they finished with “Ever, Only, ALL for Thee!””

When you become a nurse or a doctor, there are certain terminologies you have to learn and understand ... When you become a lawyer, you have to become familiar with certain expressions also ... This is how it is in many spheres of life, and when you become a *Christian*, there are certain terms to learn too.

For example, the word ‘salvation’ refers to the act of God’s grace in delivering His people from bondage to sin and condemnation, transferring them to the Kingdom of His Son, and giving them eternal life ... all on the basis of what Christ accomplished at Calvary. You become a new person in Christ.

Another example is the word ‘atonement’. Atonement means God has provided, - through the death of His Son, - the only means for mankind to come into an everlasting relationship with Him. Through atonement, - Christ’s blood shed on the cross, - God reconciles His people onto Himself. Our sins are washed away.

Another word which means so much to the Christian is ‘sanctification’. Sanctification is God’s will for all His people, - it is how every Christian should be focussed. It is, therefore, a very important subject. It describes how a Christian grows and matures.

Do you realise that when you become a Christian you become a ‘saint’? A person becomes a saint, - the Bible teaches, - when they become a Christian. It is nothing to do with having a process in some ecclesiastical organisation ... very simply, a saint is one who has a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus.

In the New Testament, the word for ‘saint’ describes someone who is ‘consecrated to God’ by virtue of Christ having died for them on the cross and taking away their sin. It is the word Ananias used when he spoke to the Lord about Saul of Tarsus, **Acts 9:13** Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem. It is the same word Peter used when he was passing through Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, **Acts 9:32** And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. ... And when Paul was testifying in front of King Agrippa, he said, **Acts 26:9** I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. **10** Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison. ... And when he was writing to the Christians in Philippi, he addressed them, **Phil. 4:21** Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. **22** All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.

... The ‘saints’ are a people particularly set apart for the Lord and His Kingdom, - they are the Body of Christ, the Church. *All* born-again believers are saints, saved, - children of God, **I Cor. 1:2** Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place

call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours, - which means since God has cleansed you and given you such a privilege, it is your purpose in life to live to please Him.

Does that mean I will never do anything wrong? No, that is not what it means, for as long as we are in this world we have all its temptations to deal with ... and most of us, - *all* of us, - succumb from time to time, here is how Paul explains it, **Rom. 7:24** O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? **25** I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In other words, I'm in a constant battle to keep away from and avoid the actions I know I should not be doing as a Christian ... and if I am doing them, and it is not troubling me, then I have to assess whether or not I *am* a Christian because Christians do not want to sin, and to continue to sin. That is what Christ has saved me from, and I don't want to go back to it! ... I want to go forward and be obedient to how the Bible teaches me to live so that Jesus is the example for how I want to live my life. Frances Havergal explains it,

Oh, let my life be given,
My years for Thee be spent;
World-fetters all be riven,
And joy with suff'ring blent [*blended*];
Thou gav'st Thyself for me, for me,
I give myself to Thee.

It is not always easy being a Christian for it goes against the flow of this world, but that is what Jesus had to do when He was here because *He* had to battle His way through the barriers and obstacles in front of Him ... And it is the same as Paul wrote, **Phil. 3:7** But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ ... **13** ... but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, **14** I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. ... He is in a race, and He is determined not to quit until he reaches glory, when he will receive the prize waiting for him. And approaching the end of his days on earth, he wrote to Timothy, **II Tim. 4:6** I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. **7** I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: **8** Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them [*the saints*] also that love his appearing.

So, is it all about me ... and how well I can be a Christian? No, it is not all about you, and how you can be a Christian, and how your Christianity depends upon

you ... it is not about that! You are not a Christian because *you* keep it, but *you* are a Christian because the *Lord* is keeping *you*. And in keeping you, you want to be like Him ... and *that* is what motivates you, - by the help of the Holy Spirit, - in the Christian life. That is what Frances Havergal was meaning when she wrote, "Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee".

I suppose we have to ask how the Roman Catholic understanding of 'saints' compares with how the Bible teaches ... In Roman Catholic doctrine, a person becomes a saint after he/she has gone through an ecclesiastical process of "beatification" and then "canonization". Such 'saints' are said to be in Heaven. In the Bible, the saints are in Heaven, and *also* on earth. In the Bible, everyone who has received Jesus Christ by faith is a saint. ... In Roman Catholic practice, the saints are revered, prayed to, and in some instances, worshipped. In the Bible, saints are called to revere, worship, and pray to God alone.

No church makes men and women saints, but God does ... based on the work of His Son Who died for His people on the cross. We're saints not through our own works, but through the work of the Saviour only. ... It is God's will for us, **I Thess. 4:7** For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness ... **Col. 1:10** That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; **11** Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; **12** Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: **13** Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Doctrinally, there are three types of sanctification ... When we are saved we are sanctified/made holy 'positionally'. That means, God looks upon us as having no sin, for all our sins have been removed forever, - **Ps. 103:12** As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

The second type of sanctification is 'progressive' or 'experiential'. That refers to the effect of our obedience to the Word of God. We progress as we are obedient to His Word, but we will *not* progress if we are disobedient and ignore what He says to us. ... When we progress as a Christian, the teaching of the Bible affects the way we live, and it leads us to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ in what we do.

The third type of sanctification is the 'ultimate ... perfect' sanctification, and that will be *completed* in glory. In fact, that is how Paul describes it, **Rom. 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who

are the called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

There are those ('Arminians') who claim the believer can achieve 'entire sanctification' ('sinless perfection') in this life, but that is an erroneous fallacy ... because perfect sanctification occurs when the Lord finally comes and gloriously takes us to Himself, **1 Cor. 15:51** Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. ... Called! ... Justified! ... Sanctified! ... Glorified! ... In the words of Frances Havergal,

Thou art coming, O my Saviour,
 Thou art coming, O my king ...
 Thou art coming, Thou art coming;
 We shall meet Thee on Thy way,
 We shall see Thee, we shall know Thee,
 We shall bless Thee, we shall show Thee
 All our hearts could never say!