

To Love So Amazing I Consecrate My All By Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879)

Classic Christian Writings:

Consecration is not a religiously selfish thing. If it sinks into that, it ceases to be consecration. We want our lives kept, not that we may feel happy, and be saved the distress consequent on wandering, and get the power with God and man and all the other privileges linked with it. We shall have all this, because the lower is included in the higher.

But our true aim, if the love of Christ constrains us, will be far beyond this. Not for "me" at all, but "for Jesus"; not for my safety, but for His glory; not for my comfort, but for His joy; not that I may find rest, but that He may see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied!

Yes, for Him I want to be kept. Kept for His sake; kept for His use; kept to be His witness; kept for His joy! Kept for Him, that in me He may show forth some tiny sparkle of His light and beauty; kept to do His will and His work in His own way; kept (it may be) to suffer for His sake; kept for Him, that He may do just what seemeth Him good with me; kept so that no other lord shall have any more dominion over me, but that Jesus shall have all there is to have—little enough, indeed, but not divided or diminished by any other claim. Is not this, O you who love the Lord—is not this worth living for, worth asking for, worth trusting for?

This is consecration, and I can not tell you the blessedness of it. The Lord Jesus does take the life that is offered to Him, and He does keep the life for Himself that is entrusted to Him; but until the life is offered we can not know the taking, and until the life is entrusted, we can not know or understand the keeping. All we can do is to say, "O taste and see!" and bear witness to the reality of Jesus Christ, and set to our seal that we have found Him true to His every word, and that we have proved Him able even to do exceeding abundantly above all we asked or thought.

Why should we hesitate to bear this testimony? We have done nothing at all; we have, in all our efforts, only proved to ourselves, and perhaps to others, that we had no power either to give or keep our lives. Why should we not, then, glorify His grace by acknowledging that we have found Him so wonderfully and tenderly gracious and faithful in both taking and keeping as we never supposed or imagined?

This is a word especially to my younger friends, who although they have named the name of Christ, are saying: "Yes, this is all very well for some people, or for older people, but I am not ready for it. I can't say I see my way to this sort of thing."

I am going to take the lowest ground for a minute and appeal to your past experience. Are you satisfied with your experience of the other "sort of thing"? Your pleasant pursuits, your harmless recreations, your nice occupations, even your improving ones, what fruit are you having from them? Your social intercourse, your daily talks and walks, your investments of all the time that remains to you over and above the absolute duties God may have given you, what fruit that shall remain have you from all this?

Day after day passes on, and year after year, and what shall the harvest be? What is even the present return? Are you getting any real and lasting satisfaction out of it all? Are you not finding that things lose their flavor, and that you are spending your strength day after day for nought? That you are no more satisfied than you were a year ago—rather less so, if anything? Does not a sense of hollowness and weariness come over you as you go on in the same round, perpetually getting through things only to begin again?

It can not be otherwise. Over even the freshest and purest earthly fountains the Hand that never makes a mistake has written, "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again" (John 3:13). Look into your own heart and you will find a copy of that inscription already traced, "Shall thirst again." And the characters are being deepened with every attempt to quench the inevitable thirst and weariness in life, which can only be satisfied and rested in full consecration to God; for "Thou has made us for Thyself, and the heart never resteth till it findeth rest in Thee."

I tell you of a brighter and happier life, whose inscription is, "Shall never thirst," a life that is no dull round-and-round in a circle of unsatisfactoriness. Rather it is a life that has found its true and entirely satisfactory center, and set itself towards a shining and entirely satisfactory goal, whose brightness is cast over every step of the way. Will you not seek it?

Do not shrink, and suspect, and hang back from what it may involve, with selfish and unconfiding and ungenerous half-heartedness. Take the word of any who have willingly offered themselves unto the Lord, that

the life of consecration is a deal better than they thought! Choose this day whom you will serve with real, thoroughgoing, wholehearted service, and He will receive you; and you will find, as we have found, that He is such a good Master that you are satisfied with His goodness, and that you will never want to go out free. Nay, rather, take His own word for it. See what He says: "If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures" (Job 36:11).

You can not possibly understand that till you are really in His service! For He does not give, nor even show, His wages before you enter it. And He says, "My servants shall sing for joy of heart" (Isa. 65:14). But you can not try over that song to see what it is like, you can not even read one bar of it, till your nominal or even promised service is exchanged for real and undivided consecration. But when He can call you His servant, then you will find yourself singing for joy of heart, because He says you shall.

And who, then, is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? Do not startle at the term, or think, because you do not understand all it may include, you are therefore not qualified for it. I dare say it comprehends a great deal more than either you or I understand, but we can both enter into the spirit of it, and the detail will unfold itself as long as our probation shall last. Christ demands a hearty consecration in will, and He will teach us what that involves in act.

This explains the paradox that full consecration may be in one sense the act of a moment, and in another the work of a lifetime. It must be complete to be real and yet, if real, it is always incomplete; a point of rest, and yet a perpetual progression.

Suppose you make over a piece of ground to another person. You give it up, then and there, entirely to that other; it is no longer in your own possession; you no longer dig and sow, plant and reap, at your discretion or for your own profit. His occupation of it is total; no other has any right to an inch of it. It is his affair thenceforth what crops to arrange for and how to make the most of it.

But his practical occupation of it may not appear all at once. There may be waste land which he will take into full cultivation only by degrees, space wasted for want of draining or by over fencing, and odd corners lost for want of enclosing; fields yielding smaller returns than they might, because of hedgerows too wide and shady, and trees too many and spreading, and strips of good soil trampled into uselessness for want of defined pathways.

Just so is it with our lives. The transaction of (so to speak) making them over to God is definite and complete. But then begins the practical development of consecration.

And here He leads on softly, according as the children be able to endure. I do not suppose any one sees anything like all that it involves at the outset. We have not a notion what an amount of waste of power there has been in our lives; we never measured out the odd corners and the undrained bits, and it never occurred to us what good fruit might be grown in our straggling hedgerows, nor how the shade of our trees has been keeping the sun from the scanty crops.

And so, season by season, we shall be sometimes not a little startled, yet always very glad, as we find that bit by bit the Master shows how much more may be made of our ground, how much more He is able to make of it than we did; and we shall be willing to work under Him and do exactly what He points out, even if it comes to cutting down a shady tree or clearing out a ditch full of pretty weeds and wild flowers.

As the seasons pass on, it will seem as if there was always more and more to be done, the very fact that He is constantly showing us something more to be done in it, proving that it is really His ground. Only let Him have the ground, no matter how poor or overgrown the soil may be, and then He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord. Yes, even our desert! And then we shall sing, "My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies" (Song of Sol. 6:2).

Made for Thyself, O God!
Made for Thy love, Thy service,
Thy delight,
Made to show forth Thy wisdom,
grace, and might;
Made for Thy praise, whom veiled
archangels laud;
O strange and glorious thought, that

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**we may be
A joy to Thee!**

Yet the heart turns away
From this grand destiny of bliss,
and deems
Â'Twas made for its poor self, for
passing dreams,
Chasing illusions melting day by day,

**Till for ourselves we read on this
world's best,
"This is not rest!"**