

## Articles and Sermons :: Our Lives Kept For Jesus -havergal

Our Lives Kept For Jesus -havergal - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/9/29 17:39

### Our Lives Kept For Jesus

by Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879)

Many a heart has echoed the little song: "Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee!" And yet those echoes have not been, in every case and at all times so clear and full and firm, so continuously glad as we would wish, and perhaps expected. Some of us have said, "I launch me forth upon a sea of boundless love and tenderness"; and after a little we have found or fancied that there is a hidden leak in our bark, and though we are doubtlessly still afloat, yet we are not sailing with the same free, exultant confidence as at first. What is it that has dulled and weakened the echo of our consecration song?

First, it may have arisen from want of the simplest belief in the simplest fact, as well as want of trust in one of the simplest and plainest words our gracious Master ever uttered. The fact not believed is simply that He hears us; the word not trusted is one of those plain, broad foundation-stones on which we rest our whole weight— "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

"Take my life!" We have said it or sung before the Lord, it may be many times; but if it were only once whispered in His ear with full purpose of heart, should we not believe that He heard it? And if we know that He heard it, should we not believe that He has answered it, and fulfilled this, our heart's desire? With Him hearing means heeding. Why should we doubt that He did take our lives when we offered them, our bodies when we presented them? Have we not been wronging His faithfulness all this time by practically, even if unconsciously, doubting whether the prayer ever really reached Him? If this is our case, is it any wonder that we have not realized all the power and joy of full consecration? By some means or other God has to teach us to trust implicitly at every step of the way. And so, if we did not really trust in this matter, He has had to let us find our lack of trust by withholding our feeling the blessing, and thus stirring us up to find out why it is withheld.

An offered gift must be either accepted or refused. Can He have refused it when He has said, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out?" If not, then it must have been accepted. It is just the same process as when we came to Him first of all with the intolerable burden of our sins. There was no help for it but to come with them to Him, and take His word for it that He would not and did not cast us out. And so coming, so believing, we found rest to our souls; we found that His word was true, and that His taking away our sins was a reality.

Some give their lives to Him then and there, and go forth to live henceforth not at all unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them. This is as it should be, for conversion and consecration ought to be simultaneous. But practically it is not very often so, except with those in whom the bringing out of darkness into marvelous light has been sudden and dazzling, and full of deepest contrasts.

More frequently the work resembles the case of the Hebrew servant described in Exodus 21, who, after six years' experience of a good master's service, dedicates himself voluntarily, unreservedly and irrevocably to it, saying, "I love my master; I will not go free"; the master then accepting and sealing him to life-long service, free in law yet bound in love. This seems to be a figure of later consecration founded on experience and love.

And yet, as at our first coming, it is less than nothing, worse than nothing that we have to bring; for our lives, even our redeemed and pardoned lives, are not only weak and worthless but defiled and sinful.

But thanks be to God for the Altar that sanctifieth the gift, even our Lord Jesus Christ Himself! By Him we draw nigh unto God; to Him, as one with the Father, we offer our living sacrifice; in Him, as the Beloved of the Father, we know it is accepted. So, dear friends, when once He has wrought in us the desire to be altogether His own, and put into our hearts the prayer, "Take my life," let us go on our way rejoicing, believing that He has taken our lives, our hands, our feet, our voices, our intellects, our wills, our whole selves, to be ever, only, all for Him.

If Full Victory Is Still Lacking

But suppose that we did believe, thankfully and surely, that the Lord heard our prayer, and that He did answer and accept us, and set us apart for Himself, and yet we find that our consecration was not merely miserably incomplete, but that we have drifted back again almost to where we were before. What is to be done then?

First, very humbly and utterly honestly we must search and try our ways before our God; or rather, as we shall soon realize our helplessness to make such a search, ask Him to do it for us, praying for His promised Spirit to show us unmistakably if there is any secret thing within us that is hindering both the inflow and outflow of His grace to us and through us. Do not let us shrink from some unexpected flash into a dark corner; do not let us wince at the sudden touching of a hidden plague spot. The Lord always does His own work thoroughly, if we will only let Him do it.

If we put our case into His hands, He will search and probe fully and firmly, though very tenderly. Very painfully, it may be, but only that He may do the very thing we want— to cleanse us and heal us thoroughly, so that we may set off to walk in real newness of life. But if we do not put it unreservedly into His hands, it will be no use thinking or talking about our lives being consecrated to Him. The heart that is not entrusted to Him for searching will not be undertaken by Him for cleansing; the life that fears to come to the light lest any deed should be reproved, can never know the blessedness and the privileges of walking in the light.

But what then, when He has graciously forgiven us and again put a new song into our mouth? What we want now is to be maintained in that position and to fulfill that course. Let us go on to another prayer: "Keep my life, for I can not keep it for Thee."

"This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John 5:14-15). There can be no doubt that this petition is according to His will, because it is based upon many a promise.

May I give it to you as it floats through my own mind again and again, knowing whom I have believed, and being persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him? (2 Tim. 1:12). "Keep my life, that it may be consecrated, Lord, to Thee."

Yes! He who is able and willing to take unto Himself is no less able and willing to keep for Himself. Our willing offering has been made by His enabling grace, and this our King has seen with joy. And now we pray, "Keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people" (1 Chron. 29:17-18).

#### Not for Self but for Jesus

Consecration is not a 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 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?

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. We give our lives over to God definitely and completely. But then begins the practical development of consecration. Here He leads on softly, according as His children are able to endure. I do not suppose anyone sees all that it involves at the outset. Little by little the Master shows how much more may be made of our lives, how much more He is able to make of them than we did. We shall be willing to work under Him and do exactly what He points out. It will seem as if there is always more and more to be done, the very fact that He is constantly showing us something more to be done in our lives is proving that they are really His. Only let Him have our lives, no matter how poor they may be, and then He will make our wilderness like Eden, and our desert like the garden of the Lord. 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 6:2).