



ISSACHARIAN DAUGHTERS

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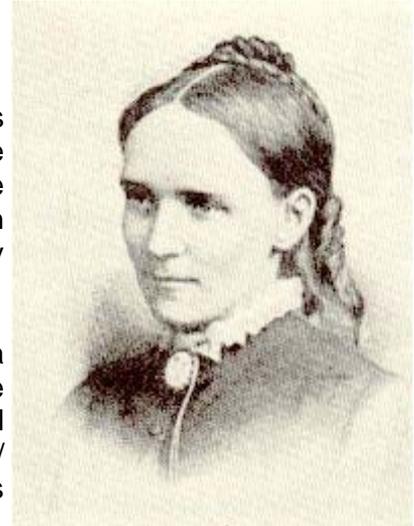
Monday, 1 January 2007

Dear Girls,

"GOD'S WILL IS *DELICIOUS*; HE MAKES NO MISTAKES."

These are some of the last words spoken by Miss Frances Ridley Havergal before she died in 1879. I would like to have known such a woman! "God's will is *delicious*!" Imagine someone making such a statement. What must she have been like? I imagine someone with a sparkle in her eye, very merry and fun and full of encouragement!

Even if we can't meet such a person ourselves, we can know a little bit about her from her own writings and from the biographies which have been written. Several little biographical sketches can be accessed at <http://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/biorphavergal.html>. I borrowed from these narratives in writing what follows.



What else would one imagine about a woman who would say, "God's will is *delicious*?" Would one imagine that she was married to the man of her dreams? In fact she died a spinster at age 42. Did she live like King Solomon who said, "Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them"? In fact she suffered for a time from temporary near blindness. Perhaps apart from that she enjoyed perfect health. Actually no, she was often sickly. So what would cause someone to make such a statement? "He makes no mistakes." Read on and let us see!

Miss Havergal was the author of this wonderful hymn (which she wrote originally as a poem to send out with her New Years Cards):

Another year is dawning, dear Father, let it be
In working or in waiting, another year with Thee.
Another year of progress, another year of praise,
Another year of proving Thy presence all the days.

Another year of mercies, of faithfulness and grace,
Another year of gladness in the shining of Thy face;
Another year of leaning upon Thy loving breast;
Another year of trusting, of quiet, happy rest.

Another year of service, of witness for Thy love,
Another year of training for holier work above.
Another year is dawning, dear Father, let it be
On earth, or else in Heaven, another year for Thee.

Rhymes came naturally to her. She was born in 1836 to Rev Henry and Mrs Jane Havergal. Her father was a great composer of hymn tunes and sacred poetry, and music filled the

atmosphere in which she lived. Many of her hymns have been set to the music written by her father.

Frances was raised in a Christian home but did not become a Christian until she was 14 years old. Her testimony is beautiful to read. It sheds light on the inner workings of a woman who intrigues me because of her deathbed statement that, "God's will is delicious; He makes no mistakes." Here is a commentary on her life which includes quotes from her testimony:

The great trouble and sorrow of her young life was that she felt she ought to love God, but that she did not. "Up to the time I was six years old," she writes, "I have no remembrance of any religious ideas whatever. But from six to eight I recall a different state of things. The beginning of it was a sermon at Hallow. Of this I even now retain a distinct impression. It was to me a very terrible one, dwelling much on hell and judgment and what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. This sermon haunted me. I began to pray a good deal, though only night and morning, with a sort of fidget and impatience, almost angry at feeling so unhappy, and wanting and expecting a new heart, and to have everything put straight and be made happy all at once.

"This sort of thing went on at intervals, for often a month or two would pass without a serious thought or a true prayer. One sort of habit I got into in a steady way; every Sunday afternoon I went alone into a little front room over the hall and read a chapter in the Testament, and then knelt down and prayed for a few minutes, after which I usually felt soothed and less naughty.

"I had a far more vivid sense of the beauty of Nature as a little child than I have even now. I have hardly felt anything so intensely since, in the way of a sort of unbearable enjoyment. The golden quiet of a bright summer's day used to enter into me and do me good. What only some great and rare musical enjoyment is to me now, the shade of a tree under a clear blue sky, with a sunbeam glancing through the boughs, was to me then. But I did not feel happy in my very enjoyment; I wanted *more*. I do not think I was eight when I hit upon Cowper's lines, ending:

'My Father made them all!'

That was what I wanted to be able to say; and, after once seeing the words, I never saw a lovely scene again without being *teased* by them.

"One spring (I think 1845) I kept thinking of them, and a dozen times a day said to myself, 'Oh, if God would but make me a Christian before the summer comes,' because I longed so to enjoy His works as I felt they could be enjoyed.

"All this while I don't think any one could have given the remotest guess of what was passing in my mind. I *knew* I was a 'naughty child'; in fact, I almost enjoyed my naughtiness in a savage, desperate kind of way, despairing of getting better, except by being made a Christian."

She longed for someone to tell her about Christ. She says good men used to come and preach beautiful sermons in her father's church, but when they went home with them they talked of all sorts of other things, "and I did so wish they would talk about the Saviour whom I wanted, but had not found. It would have been so much more interesting to me, and oh! why didn't they ever talk to me about Him, instead of about my lessons or their little girls at home? They did not know how a hungry little soul went empty away."

"Soon a sermon by the curate, on 'Fear not, little flock,' struck me very much. I did so want to be happy and a 'Christian.' I had never yet spoken to any mortal about

religion; but now I was so uneasy, that after nearly a fortnight's hesitation, being alone with the curate one evening, when almost dark, I told him my trouble, saying I thought I was getting worse. He said moving, and coming to new scenes was the cause, most likely, of my feeling worse, and that it would soon go off; I was to try to be a good child and pray, etc., etc. So after that my lips were utterly sealed to all but God for five years."

"A merry laugh or a sudden light-heeled scamper led others to think I had not many sad thoughts, whereas not a minute before my little heart was heavy and sad."

After her mother's death, when she was eleven, she was often a good deal with her eldest sister, Miriam, at Oakhampton, where she is remembered as a clever, amusing child, sometimes a little wilful and troublesome from mere excess of animal spirits, but always affectionate and grateful for any little treat; much given to reading poetry, and not so tidy as she afterwards became, for she used to leave books about in the hay-loft, manger, and all sorts of garden nooks. But all this while the little girl still carried about with her, wherever she went, that burden of hidden trouble she had borne so long. "I know," the autobiography goes on, "I did not love God; the very thought of Him frightened me." She would try to force herself to think about God, hard as it was to do so. Going to bed, she would begin "How good it was of God to send Jesus to die," while she by no means felt or believed that wonderful goodness.

"Between thirteen and fourteen," Frances writes, "a soberising thoughtful time seemed to fall on me like a mantle, and my strivings were no longer the passionate spasmodic meteor flashes they had been, but something deeper, more settled, more sorrowful. All this was secret, and only within my own breast very few knew me to be anything but a careless, merry girl, light-hearted in the extreme. Now came a more definite and earnest prayer, for *faith*. Oh, to believe in Jesus, to believe that He had pardoned me! I used to lie awake in the long summer twilight praying for this precious gift. I read a great deal of the Bible in a 'straight on' sort of way. Once I determined, if eternal life were in the Scriptures, find it I *would*, and resolved to begin giving an hour a day to very careful and prayerful reading of the New Testament.

"In August 1850 I was sent to school. [She had been educated at home up until this point.] The night before I went, Ellen, dear, gentle, heavenly sister, stood by me brushing my hair. She spoke of God's love. I could not stand it, and for the first time for five years I spoke out; 'I can't love God yet, Nellie,' was all I said, but I felt a great deal more. Mrs. Teed, the principal of the school, had a sweet and holy power. She prayed and spoke with us with a fervour I have never seen equalled. There were many Christian girls. I envied them. Mary was one. I longed to tell her how unhappy I was. At last I did. The simple, loving words of my little Heaven-taught schoolfellow brought dewy refreshment to my soul as she said, in French (we always had to speak French): Jesus said, 'Suffer the little children,' etc. It is every little child who ought to come to Him, every little child whom He calls, every little child whom He embraces.

"After this I had many talks with Mary, but with no one else. To Diana, the goddess among my school friends, and whom I believed to be like Mary, not a word could I speak; though I longed to hear her speak to me as Mary did.

"I drank in every word I heard about Jesus and His salvation. I came to see that it was Christ *alone* that could satisfy me. I wept and prayed day and night; but 'there was no voice nor any that answered.' I shall never forget the evening of Sunday, December 8th. Diana, whom I loved with a perfectly idolatrous affection, had hardly seen me all day. For some time I had noticed a slight depression about her. That evening, as I sat nearly opposite to her at tea, I could not help seeing (nobody could) a new and remarkable radiance about her countenance. It seemed literally lighted up from within while her voice, even in the commonest remarks, sounded like a song of gladness. I looked at her almost with awe. As soon as tea was over she came round to my side of the table, sat down by me on the form, threw her arm around me and said: 'Oh Fanny,

dearest Fanny, the blessing has come to me at last. Jesus has forgiven me, I know. He is my Saviour, and I am so happy! Only come to Him and He will receive you. Even now He loves you, though you don't know it.'

"Having broken the ice at Belmont (my school), it was the less difficult to do so again; and before long I had a confidante in Miss Cooke, who afterwards became my loved mother. We were visiting at the same time at Oakhampton, and had several conversations, each of which left me more earnest and hopeful. At last, one evening in the twilight, I sat on the drawing-room sofa alone with her. I told her how I longed to know I was forgiven. She paused, and then said slowly: 'Then, Fanny, I think, I am *sure* it will not be very long before your desire is granted, your hope fulfilled.' After a few more words, she said: 'Why cannot you trust yourself to your Saviour at once? Supposing now, at this moment, Christ were to come, could you not trust Him? Would not His call, His promise, be enough for you? Could you not commit your soul to him, to your Saviour, Jesus?'

"Then came a flash of hope across me, which made me feel literally breathless. I remember how my heart beat. 'I *could*, surely,' was my response; and I left her suddenly and ran away upstairs to think it out. I flung myself on my knees in my room, and strove to realise the sudden hope. I was very happy at last; I could commit my soul to Jesus. I could trust Him with my all for eternity. It was so utterly new to have any bright thoughts about religion that I could hardly believe that it could be so.

"Then and there I committed my soul to the Saviour; I do not mean to say without any trembling or fear, but I did; and earth and heaven seemed bright from that moment; *I did trust the Lord Jesus.*

"For the *first* time my Bible was sweet to me, and the first passage I distinctly remember reading, in a new and glad light, was the fourteenth and following chapters of St. John's Gospel."

This was in February, 1851, when Frances Havergal was fourteen. With this new glad light there came to her a great eagerness for study. She threw herself into her lessons with intense enjoyment until December came, when a severe attack of erysipelas in her face and head put a stop to the work she loved only too well. She was at once taken home, and was for some time nearly blind.

She bore it with great patience, although it was a great trial to one of her active temperament. To lie still was a difficult task for her; but to know that she must neither go to school nor study at home for a long time was indeed dreadful news.

In time she recovered from this illness. She learned French, German, Latin and Hebrew. Her father taught her Greek. She memorized large portions of the Bible including the Psalms, the book of Isaiah, the New Testament and the minor prophets.

Her father died suddenly in 1870, and she prepared for the press a new edition of his 'Psalmody.' She worked to make her father a success even after his death!

Even though she nearly lost her sight she was still able to write this beautiful hymn in later life known as the *Consecration* hymn.

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.

The Lord had her life and this was delicious.

She had consecrated her life to her Saviour. She loved Him dearly. God's Holy Word was her constant companion. She was earnest in prayer. Perhaps something she said to her sister will shed some final light on what led to her comment, "God's will is *delicious*; He makes no mistakes."

"Marie, it is really very remarkable, how everything I do seems to prosper and flourish. I thought this morning *why* it was so. I think I have the promise of the First Psalm. You know it says: 'His delight is in the law of the LORD ... and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.' You know how I do love my Bible more and more; and so, of course, the promise comes true to me."

May we all consecrate our lives to our Saviour Jesus Christ and live them for Him during 2007 and beyond. And may we experience the fulfillment of the promises of Scripture as Francis Havergal did and say with her, "God's will is delicious, He makes no mistakes!"

For the Greater Glory of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

Genevieve Smith
Issacharian Daughter

Notes:

I have sent this email to girls who have embraced a vision of victorious daughterhood as well as those who may be thinking about doing so (and even to some girls who may just like some encouragement regarding different areas of home life). Some of the girls are in the USA. Most are in New Zealand. You are welcome to forward this email on to others so long as you do so in its entirety. If you do not want to receive these emails please just send a return email to me stating that fact. If you know of other girls who would be encouraged by receiving these emails, feel free to forward the email to them or send me their email address.

