

At age 36 Frances Havergal testified that she had served the Lord for years. But she said she felt that something was missing in her Christian experience. Then one day in 1873, she received a little book called, *"All For Jesus."* After reading that book, she became a true steward by making a fresh and complete consecration of herself to Jesus. Years later, she said, "It was on Advent Sunday, December 2, 1873, when I first saw clearly the blessedness of true consecration. I saw it as a flash of electric light, and what you see you can never un-see. There must be full surrender before there can be full blessedness."

This experience inspired Havergal to write the words of today's hymn. It stresses that a good steward is a complete steward. We must give everything to God. Havergal had a beautiful voice and frequently sang with the Philharmonic. But she realized that she must give her voice completely to Jesus and wrote, *"Take my voice and let me sing, always only for my King."* (verse 2) From then on, she gave up secular concerts and devoted her singing exclusively to God. She was also a very wealthy woman with lots of expensive jewelry but felt that it should be given to God and wrote the verse that says, *"Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold."* (verse 2) She donated it all to missions and wrote a friend saying, "I never packed a box with such pleasure."

Look at the words and see how Havergal completely described what biblical stewardship really means. *"Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love."* (verse 1) *"Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee."* (verse 1) *"Take my will and make it thine. It shall be no longer mine."* (verse 3) *"Take my love, my God I pour at thy feet its treasure store."* (verse 3) *"Take myself and I will be ever, only all for thee."* (verse 3) Obviously Havergal understood that stewardship is more than what is in our bank accounts. It includes everything.

This morning God is calling us to offer our life. It could be the way we use our hands, our career or the way we use our feet, the places we use them to go, or the way we use our money, or the things we love, our affections. Are we willing to give them to God? God is knocking on our heart's door, asking us to invite God in. Let God in and give your life to God.

August 27, 2017

Great Hymns: Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated

2 Corinthians 9:6-8; Romans 12:1

Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

Today's hymn, *"Take My Life and Let it Be,"* is about stewardship. I know this subject, stewardship, is unpopular. Many people don't want even the mention of this topic. In spite of this unpopular subject, there are several reasons to study stewardship.

1. Stewardship is a biblical thing.

The subject of giving has a central place in the Bible. God tells us how to save, spend and manage our money, how to give our money, and how to avoid debt. God warns us that money can be a harmful thing if it leads us to sin and becomes a "god" that we worship.

Stewardship helps us get the power to live life as Jesus wants us to. So when we learn to give of our time, talents, and especially money, we become more Christlike. Stewardship also helps us to strengthen and deepen our friendship with God. The more we trust God, the more sacrificially we give and the deeper our relationship with God grows.

2. Stewardship is a faith thing.

In the Bible, over and over again God says that when we give to further God's purposes, God will provide for our needs. In our text from Corinthians Paul says, *"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."* (2 Cor. 9:8) In Matthew 6:31-33 Jesus says, *"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* When we refuse to be obedient stewards we are saying in essence that we don't trust God. We are choosing to trust 'me,' to take care of 'me' instead of God.

All of us struggle from time to time to allow God to be the source of our sufficiency. Our bank statements show very clearly that it is often difficult for us to learn to trust God with our lives. Many believers have never learned to trust God with their money. They have never invited

God to be Lord of their bank account. But we must learn that God is trustworthy. God will meet our needs and more. There is no exception in tough economic times. The Bible says we can always trust God to take care of us. Our giving is our way of stepping out in faith to embrace that belief.

Esther and I have tithed. It is quite a challenge for our family. We have to carefully discern how to save or spend money after tithing. But we can testify that God has been trustworthy. God has always provided for our needs and so much more. R. G. LeTourneau said, "I shovel out and God shovels in, but God's shovel is always bigger." This reminds me of God's promise in our text from Malachi 3 where God says that if we "*Bring all the tithes in the storehouse...*" God will, "*...throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that we will not have room enough for it.*" (3:10) I'm not preaching prosperity gospel here. I'm just saying that as we give, God will meet our needs! I would like you to remember that giving, tithing is a FAITH thing.

I'm reminded of the story of two lumberjacks who decided to paddle across the lake to a tavern one Saturday night. They paddled their canoe all the way across the huge lake, tied it to the shore, and went up to the tavern. Before the evening was spent they got roaring drunk. They eventually made their way back to the canoe and were going to row across the lake and go back to camp. They got in the boat and paddled and paddled and paddled until they were both exhausted. They looked around and saw that they had never even gotten away from the shore. They were exhausted, no strength left, so they plopped down and fell asleep in the boat. When they were awakened the next morning by the rising sun, they discovered the problem. They had never untied the boat from the dock.

There are thousands of Christians who act the same way. Every month they fight the battle of the budget and lose. They just can't make ends meet. They can't get anywhere financially. They are always exhausted financially. Why is that so? Why can't they make any financial headway? It's because "they haven't untied the canoe!" They've never "let go of the dock." They've never turned their personal finances over to God. They've never professed their faith in Christ.

Let me suggest something to you. I have no idea how much you give to God. Whether you tithe or not is none of my business. It's between you and God. But, if you've never trusted God to meet your needs, give it a shot. Try it. Maybe 10% is too much for you right now and that's okay. Start at 2% or 5%, but start at a level that requires you personally to trust God and watch what God does. If God is faithful and God will be, then gradually increase your giving to a full tithe. See what God does when you trust Him. Experience the size of God's shovel!

3. Stewardship is an investment thing.

We can spend our money and our time in two ways. It can go for things that don't last or for things that do last. Wise people, good stewards, will invest their money in things that last the longest. If we are to be "right" on the money, we will invest in eternal things. We'll give to God and do things that further God's kingdom.

When our family goes on a vacation, we usually get two or three star hotels at a fair price through the internet. When our family was driving in Connecticut, our car broke down. We happened to stay at a Super 8 Motel one night while our car was being repaired in the dealer shop. I know several good Super 8 Motels, but unfortunately that hotel was one of the worst hotels we stayed at. The beds were hard, the furniture was sparse, the towels were small, and in each room they had two copies of the same picture, one identical print hanging over each bed.

How wise would it be for you to take all your money and use it to decorate that room? Would you clean out your bank account to purchase expensive paintings to hang on the walls and to have select comfort beds installed? Would you buy a 60 inch LCD high definition TV and have it mounted on the wall in your room? Knowing you would be there only a few days, would you invest in a surround sound system? That would be foolish because that motel room is not your home. You're only going to be there a little while.

That's the way it is with this life. We live in this world only a very brief time. We are just passing through. So it's silly to invest our money "decorating" this temporary world with temporary things. We must focus on eternal things, things that further God's kingdom!