**The Story & Theology of Particular Hymns**

Lesson 2 – Fanny Crosby: “All the Way My Savior Leads Me” (#605) & “Blessed Assurance” (#693)

**Biography**

* 1823-1915
* Blinded at 6 weeks old by improper medical treatment
* She memorized the first four books of the Old Testament, and also the four Gospels before she was ten years of age
* Educated at and taught for the New York School for the Blind
* Lifelong member of St. John’s Methodist Episcopal Church
* Married blind musician Alexander Van Alstyne in 1858
* Her early writings were secular in nature
* One song, “Rosalie, the Prairie Flower” brought her almost $3000 in royalties
* Began in her 40s to write gospel songs under the influence of W.B. Bradbury, a well-known church musician of that day
* Fanny was the first woman to speak publically in the U. S. Senate when she read one of her poems
* Because of her long life, she had an extraordinary relationship with several United States presidents, even penning poems in their honor on occasion, and she was influential on the spiritual life of or a friend to Presidents Martin Van Buren (8th), John Tyler (10th), James K. Polk (11th), and Grover Cleveland (22nd and 24th)
* She wrote that had it not been for her affliction she might not have had so good an education, nor so great an influence, and certainly not so fine a memory.
* Her gravestone in Bridgeport, Connecticut, is engraved with the words of Jesus which He said to Mary when she anointed Him with perfume: “She hath done what she could.”

**Occasion for “All the Way My Savior Leads Me”**

* One day, Fanny found herself in need of $5 to pay her rent and did not know from where it was going to come
* She began to pray about the situation
* Within a few minutes a stranger appeared at her door with $5
* “I have no way of account for this except to believe that God, in answer to my prayer, put it into the heart of this good man to bring the money. My first thought was, ‘It is so wonderful the way the Lord leads me.’ I immediately wrote the poem.”
* It first appeared in a Sunday School collection called *Brightest and Best* in 1875

**Theology of “All the Way My Savior Leads Me”**

* Verse 1: In any and every circumstance, God is with us. He has given us all that we need so how can we doubt Him?
* Verse 2: Jesus keeps and sustains us even when our feet slip and we sin
* Verse 3: When it is all said and done and we are in glory, it was Jesus who brought us there
* Psalm 23:3 – “He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”
* Psalm 48:14b – “He will guide us forever.”
* John 10:4 – “When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”
* Revelation 7:17 – “For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water,”

**Occasion for “Blessed Assurance”**

* Sometimes Fanny would write the verse and a composer would come along to write music to fit the verse. Other times, it was the exact opposite.
* Phoebe Knapp, an amateur musician and close friend, played a tune she had composed for Fanny one day.
* The friend asked, “What does this tune say?”
* Fanny responded, “Why, that says: Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine” and she went on to recite the entire first verse there on the spot.

**Theology of “Blessed Assurance”**

* Crosby captured the essence of the Wesleyan understanding of Christian perfection.
* The theology which undergirds this hymn is a theology which believes that Christians, if they perfectly surrender their flesh [“perfect submission”] really can experience this “perfect delight” on this side of glory. As we submit ourselves to Christ and are "filled with his goodness" and "lost in his love" [stanza 3], we are remade in Christ's image and are moving toward Christian perfection.
* Verse 1: The best verse of the song. We are “purchased of God”, “born of his Spirit,” “washed in His blood,” “heirs of salvation,” and our blessed assurance of that salvation certainly is a foretaste of the divine glory of Heaven. One quibble: Our assurance is based on the fact that we belong to Jesus rather than Jesus belonging to us.
* Verses 2/3: I don’t have perfect submission. These verses reflect this Wesleyan-Keswick understanding of Christian perfectionism. Internally, you can reach Christian perfection in this life. You can have perfect love for Christ in this life. This is the theology of “let go and let God”

**Other Crosby Hymns**

* “To God Be the Glory” (#55)
* “Praise Him! Praise Him!” (#173)
* “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross” (#264)
* “Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It!” (#701)