

## CFBC Hymns Class 35

### Fanny Crosby (1820-1915)

Frances Jane van Alstyne, more commonly known as Fanny Crosby

*"Oh, what a happy soul I am, although I cannot see!  
I am resolved that in this world contented I will be."*



*"If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind...for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Saviour."*

*Take the wold, but give me Jesus;  
In His cross my trust shall be,  
Till, with clearer, brighter vision  
Face to face my Lord I see.*

*"Oh what a happy soul am I although I cannot see, I am resolved that in this world contented I shall be. How many blessings I enjoy that other people don't. To weep and sigh, because I'm blind? I cannot and I won't."*

*"Redeemed how I love to proclaim it. Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Redeemed thru His infinite mercy His child and forever I am."*

*"We are traveling on with our staff in hand... We are pilgrims bound for the heavenly land."*

*“God will answer you prayers better than you think. Of course, one will not always get exactly what he has asked for....We all have sorrows and disappointments, but one must never forget that, if commended to God, they will issue in good....His own solution is far better than any we could conceive.”*

*“It is not enough to have a song on your lips. You must also have a song in your heart.”*

## **An Introduction to Fanny Crosby**

Francis Jane Crosby wrote more than 9,000 hymns...And, for most people, the most remarkable thing about her was that she had done so in spite of her blindness.

"I think it is a great pity that the Master did not give you sight when he showered so many other gifts upon you," remarked one well-meaning preacher. Fanny Crosby responded at once, as she had heard such comments before. "Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I was born blind?" said the poet, who had been able to see only for her first six weeks of life. "Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior."

Born in Putnam County, New York, Crosby became ill within two months. Unfortunately, the family doctor was away, and another man—pretending to be a certified doctor—treated her by prescribing hot mustard poultices to be applied to her eyes. Her illness eventually relented, but the treatment left her blind...A few months later, Crosby's father died. Her mother was forced to find work as a maid to support the family, and Fanny was mostly raised by her Christian grandmother.

While she enjoyed her poetry, she zealously memorized the Bible. Memorizing five chapters a week, even as a child she could recite the Pentateuch, the Gospels, Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and many psalms by chapter and verse.

Shortly before her fifteenth birthday, Crosby was sent to the recently founded New York Institute for the Blind, which would be her home for 23 years: 12 as a student, 11 as a teacher. She initially indulged in her own poetry and was called upon to pen verses for various occasions.

By age 23 Crosby was addressing Congress and making friendships with presidents. In fact, she knew all the chief executives of her lifetime...

Another member of the institute, former pupil Alexander van Alstyne, married Crosby in 1858. Considered one of New York's best organists, he wrote the music to many of Crosby's hymns. Crosby herself put music to only a few of hers, though she played harp, piano, guitar, and other instruments.

More often, musicians came to her for lyrics. For example, one day musician William Doane dropped by her home for a surprise visit, begging her to put some words to a tune he had recently written and which he was to perform at an upcoming Sunday School convention. The only problem was that his train to the convention was leaving in 35 minutes. He sat at the piano and played the tune.

"Your music says, 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus,' " Crosby said, scribbling out the hymn's words immediately. "Read it on the train and hurry. You don't want to be late!" The hymn became one of Crosby's most famous.

Though she was under contract to submit three hymns a week to her publisher and often wrote six or seven a day (for a dollar or two each), many became incredibly popular. When Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey began to use them in their crusades, they received even more attention. Among them are "Blessed Assurance," "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," "To God Be the Glory," "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior," "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," "Rescue the Perishing," and "Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross."

She could write very complex hymns and compose music with a more classical structure (she could even improvise it), but she preferred to write simple, sentimental verses that could be used for evangelism. She continued to write her poetry up to her death, a month shy of her ninety-fifth birthday. "You will reach the river brink, some sweet day, bye and bye," was her last stanza.

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/poets/fanny-crosby.html>

## **The Life and Legacy of Fanny Crosby**

The name of Fanny Crosby (Mrs. Frances Jane Van Alstyne) is bound up with the evangelism of the last half century. To hear her name is to think of gospel songs and to remember pleasantly the blind poet who wrote "Blessed Assurance," "Rescue the Perishing" and "Saved by Grace." Yet few, even of those who are especially interested in gospel hymnody, realize the extent of her work.

Fanny Crosby was born in the little village of Southeast, Putnam County, New York, on March 24, 1820. At six weeks, her eyes became inflamed. A local physician applied hot poultices, with the result that her vision was destroyed.

The popular indignation when this malpractice became known flamed so hot that the ill-educated doctor hurriedly left town for parts unknown. Fanny, herself, however, as she grew into girlhood, harbored no trace of resentment against him. She accepted her lot cheerfully, as a part of the will of God for her. Her natural buoyancy of disposition reinforced her Christian faith.

"Blindness," she wrote in later life, "can not keep the sunlight of hope from the trustful soul. One of the easiest resolves that I formed in my young and joyous heart was to leave all care to yesterday, and to believe that the morning would bring forth its own peculiar joy." A wise and fruitful resolve!

Fanny Crosby was well born. She can trace the two lines of her ancestry back to the earliest New England stock. Her mother, who was also a Crosby, was descended from Simon Crosby who came to Boston in 1635 and was one of the founders of Harvard College, from which his son, Thomas, was graduated in 1653. Fanny's great grandfather, Isaac Crosby, was the father of nineteen children. One of them was born while he was serving in the Revolutionary Army; whereupon he asked for a furlough on the ground that he had many children at home and "hadn't ever seen one of them." The furlough was immediately granted...

Fanny Crosby came naturally therefore by a sense of humor and a playful spirit. She was full of fun, joined the other children in play, and was likely to be deep in any mischief that was going on. Taking the description of natural objects from her young companions, imagination made them as plain to her as sight did to them. She would leap over stone walls, play tag, climb trees with the agility of a cat, and ride the colts bareback across the fields. This vivid imagination was made possible by senses of hearing and touch unusually graphic. Sounds of nature, for instance, were always a "feast" to her.

Fanny often turned to the rose garden which she had always loved. She was allowed to pick whatever roses she wanted except from a certain white rose bush "in the midst of the garden." She would probably never have yielded to temptation by herself; but when her companions asked her for a white rose, she picked one for them. Her aunt saw her do it; and later in the day, she called Fanny and asked her if she had picked a white rose. Promptly came the answer, "No," although the child had never told an untruth before. The aunt took down the Bible and read the story of Ananias and Sapphira, without note or comment. Fanny learned her life-long lesson that day.

At this period of her life, she began to learn Bible verses. Thereby her memory, which throughout life has been remarkable, was trained.

And thereby the foundation was laid for her knowledge of the Bible, which was of such inestimable advantage to her as a hymn-writer. When there were competitions in reciting Bible verses either at home or at school, she was always victor. Evening after evening at twilight, she would sit on a favorite big brown rock and drink in the sounds of birds, crickets and the near-by waterfall, imagining the hues of the sky and softly repeating to herself all the verses of the Bible that came to her well stocked mind.

Although the little girl herself, probably because she did not know the poignancy of contrast, did not fret because of her sightlessness, Mrs. Crosby could not endure the thought of her daughter's blindness, if a cure could be effected. So a journey was planned to New York City to consult the great specialist, Dr. Valentine Mott. It was an adventurous journey to reach the Hudson River; then a trip of several days in the sailboat, where the mother was seasick and little Frances played with the captain and the crew who sang songs and spun "yarns."

After a journey more fraught with incident and excitement than would now-a-days be crowded into a trip across the continent, they arrived in New York; and after a few days' rest, presented themselves to the renowned physician for his examination and verdict. "My child," he said, in tones memorable for their kindness, "you can never be made to see!" The loving mother was grief-stricken, but not so the child. Life had brought her much joy already; would not yet fuller joy come with the years? She could not but look forward with anticipation and courage. In that mood was born her first poem, written when she was eight years old:

Oh! what a happy soul I am!  
Although I cannot see,  
I am resolved that in this world  
Contented I will be.  
How many blessings I enjoy  
That other people don't!  
To weep and sigh because I'm blind  
I cannot nor I won't.

If the reader smiles at the expressions, he must admire at least the sentiment. To gain an education now became her consuming ambition. Her father had died when she was less than a year old, and the family resources were meager. At the age of fifteen, she was admitted to the New York Institute for the Blind and a new chapter in her life was begun. She did all she could to show her appreciation of the opportunities of this school. Because of her cheerful disposition and ready companionship she became a favorite among her blind companions.

Her skill in versifying seemed remarkable to her mates who nearly succeeded in turning her head with their praise.

A wise teacher, seeing this danger, called her to his office and gave her wholesome truth about her poetry and herself. "Fanny, shun a flatterer as you would a viper," he concluded.

Among the chief advantages in this school was the opportunity to meet distinguished people. Visitors from foreign lands and American notables paid visits to the Institute and were introduced to the students...

Less pleasant to record was the breaking out of cholera in the Institute. The epidemic raged fiercely in the city, and the hoarse cry: "Bring out your dead!" sounded grimly in the night hours. Many of the blind caught the infection and died. Miss Crosby herself had the initial symptoms one afternoon. Bravely she kept the news to herself, took the medicine, practiced the precautions which had been enjoined, committed herself to God...and woke in the morning to find herself perfectly well! Those were dreadful days and left their scar upon the memory of those who passed through them.

After seven years of student life, Miss Crosby was graduated from the Institute, to return to it afterwards as teacher for eleven years, from 1847 to 1858.

The most significant occurrence in this period of her life was her conversion. She had been religious from childhood up, but not until she was thirty-one years of age did she have that vital assurance of Christ's love and God's pardon that she called her conversion. One night in a vivid dream, a warm friend of hers, who seemed to be dying, asked her, "Will you meet me in heaven?" It did not matter to find, on waking, that the friend was in sound health. The question had set her to thinking deeply. Shortly after she and her companions were singing, "Alas! and did my Saviour bleed" and as they came to the line, "Here, Lord, I give myself away," she definitely offered herself to God and a flood of light and joy ensued. She joined the Old John Street Methodist church. This experience became determinative of her inner life, of her lifework, and of the sentiment of her hymns.

Fanny Crosby was married to Mr. Alexander Van Alstyne in 1858. Like herself, he was blind and had been a teacher in the Institute for the Blind. He was musical, also, and their united lives made harmony for forty-four years, until his death in 1902. At his wish, she continued to write under her maiden name by which she was already becoming widely known.

At the time of her marriage, Fanny Crosby was well started on what proved to be her life-career, that of producing Christian verse.

In 1851, Mr. George F. Root, important in the development of music in America, wrote an air for which he needed words. She supplied them so acceptably that they collaborated in about sixty songs. All of these had a wide circulation and some became the most successful songs of the period.

Another composer with whom she was early thrown in contact was William B. Bradbury...When Mr. Bradbury was introduced to Miss Crosby, he was deeply impressed with her work. "I am surprised beyond measure," he said, "and as long as I have a publishing house, you will always have work." He had long desired such words as Miss Crosby could write. This promise was fulfilled, and her connection with the firm ran for more than forty years. Mr. Bradbury himself, however, did not long survive. When he died, in 1868, his last words to her were, "Take up my life-work where I lay it down." At his funeral there was sung the first hymn they had done together...

Where the fields are robed in beauty  
And the sunlight never dies.

In these early years, she worked much for Philip Phillips, the singing evangelist, whose songs were collected in *The Singing Pilgrim*. At one time he gave her a commission for forty hymns. These she did one by one, storing them all in her mind till all the forty were ready; not until then was the amanuensis called in. Not one of them was put on paper until all were done. As a feat of memory, that is truly remarkable, almost incredible. Later she repeated the feat, furnishing him with nearly as many more, not one of which was committed to writing until all were finished.

Another of her collaborators was Robert Lowry; to his music she wrote one of her most inspired hymns— "All the Way my Saviour leads me."

In 1894, when Miss Crosby was at Northfield, she was asked to make an address. At first she demurred, but finally consented and closed her remarks with the verses, "Some day the silver cord will break." The audience was much moved; and an English reporter who was present took down her hymn and published it in his London newspaper. Some time later, Mr. Sankey, who himself has successfully set some of her poems to music, saw the paper, cut out the verses and handed them to Mr. George C. Stebbins to be set to music. The inspiration came; and soon the world was singing, "Saved by Grace."

Very different from the religious atmosphere of Northfield were the surroundings which gave rise to another of Miss Crosby's great hymns.

When Miss Crosby was visiting a mission in one of the worst slums of New York, her sympathies were kindled and the yearning of her heart found expression in "Rescue the Perishing"—a hymn which has become indispensable in rescue work of all sorts.

There is a story of a man in Sussex, England, who owes equally much to this hymn. "I believe I can attribute my conversion, through the grace of God, to one verse of that precious hymn, 'Rescue the Perishing,'" he says. "I was far away from my Saviour and living without a Christian hope. I was fond, however, of singing hymns, and one day I came across this beautiful piece; and when I had sung the words

Down in the human heart, crushed by the Tempter,  
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;  
Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,  
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more

I fell upon my knees and gave my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. From that hour I have followed Him who, through this verse, touched my heart and made it vibrate with His praises ever since."

Of the far-reaching influence of Fanny Crosby, only eternity can give the details. Fanny Crosby has "tasted and seen that the Lord is good" and desires others to enjoy the same bountiful feast. Shut in from the distracting sights of the outer world, she has seen deeply into eternal truth and has put that truth into verse that has influenced countless thousands of lives. Over fifty million copies of her gospel songs have been sold.

<https://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/bcrosby8.html>

### **Last Words from Fanny Crosby...**

It may be of interest to include here Fanny's final lines of verse, written just hours before she died of a massive cerebral hemorrhage:

In the morn of Zion's glory,  
When the clouds have rolled away,  
And my hope has dropped its anchor  
In the vale of perfect day,

When with all the pure and holy  
I shall strike my harp anew,  
With a power no arm can sever,  
Love will hold me fast and true



## **To God Be The Glory (WordWise Hymns Commentary excerpts)**

Stanza 1... To God be the glory, great things He hath done;  
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,  
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,  
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,  
Let the earth hear His voice!  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,  
Let the people rejoice!  
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,  
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.*

This is a wonderfully joyous song of praise from the pen of Fanny Crosby. To God be *glory*—the Greek word (*doxa*), has to do with the revelation of God’s distinctive excellence and, by extension, praising Him for these things. All that God is and does, and all He has created, reflect glory to Him. “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever” (Rom. 11:36). And the glory due to Him will extend through all eternity, “to whom be glory forever and ever” (Gal. 1:5; cf. Phil. 4:20).

The infinite wisdom God has shown, and will forever demonstrate, in doing things as He has, is also forever glorious. “To God our Saviour, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever” (Jude 1:25; cf. Rom. 16:27). One way this is clearly demonstrated is in the church of Jesus Christ. “To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:21; cf. vs. 10).

To God belongs eternal glory for His preservation of the saints, and for their coming exaltation. As the Apostle Paul puts it, “The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever” (II Tim. 4:18). And in eternity we’ll praise Him because He “has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” Rev. 1:6).

The root and superabundant Source of all that God has done and will yet do for us fallen human beings is made possible by the saving work of His Son. That is the central theme of Fanny Crosby’s song of praise. She exalts the Lord because the multiplied blessings of salvation are “through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever” (Heb. 13:21).

Stanza 2... O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,  
To every believer the promise of God;  
The vilest offender who truly believes,  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

In Stanza 3, as in a number of her songs, Fanny Crosby rejoiced to think that one day she would *see* her Saviour face to face. This is all the more poignant and meaningful since she was blind, and spent most of her life in darkness. She praised the Lord that His face would be the first she'd see.

Great things He has taught us, great things He has done,  
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;  
But purer, and higher, and greater will be  
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

<https://wordwisehymns.com/2011/10/19/to-god-be-the-glory/>

### **Redeemed How I Love To Proclaim It (WordWise Hymns Commentary excerpts)**

1 Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,  
His child, and forever, I am.

Refrain:  
Redeemed, redeemed,  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!  
His child, and forever, I am.

2 I think of my blessed Redeemer,  
I think of Him all the day long;  
I sing, for I cannot be silent;  
His love is the theme of my song. [Refrain]

3 I know I shall see in His beauty  
The King in whose law I delight,  
Who lovingly guardeth my footsteps,  
And giveth me songs in the night. [Refrain]

An oft omitted stanza says:

4 I know there's a crown that is waiting,  
In yonder bright mansion for me,  
And soon, with the spirits made perfect,  
At home with the Lord I shall be.

In her joyful gospel song, Fanny Crosby lists several blessings she enjoys because of the redeeming work of Christ. We rejoice with her when we sing these words about our salvation.

- ✕ We are made His children forever
- ✕ We live constantly in the light of His presence
- ✕ We are guarded and guided by Him
- ✕ We are happy in the Lord
- ✕ We joyfully meditate on the things of the Lord
- ✕ We have a song in our hearts, even in dark times
- ✕ We will be with Him in heaven one day
- ✕ We will have heavenly rewards and dwelling places there

<https://wordwisehymns.com/2013/09/30/redeemed-how-i-love-to-proclaim-it/>

## **Rescue the Perishing**

1 Rescue the perishing,  
Care for the dying,  
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;  
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,  
Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.

Refrain:

Rescue the perishing,  
Care for the dying;  
Jesus is merciful,  
Jesus will save.

2 Though they are slighting Him,  
Still He is waiting,  
Waiting the penitent child to receive;  
Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently;  
He will forgive if they only believe. [Refrain]

3 Down in the human heart,  
Crushed by the tempter,  
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;  
Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,  
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more. [Refrain]

4 Rescue the perishing,  
Duty demands it;  
Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide;  
Back to the narrow way patiently win them;  
Tell the poor wanderer a Savior has died. [Refrain]

### **Blessed Assurance**

1 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Refrain:

This is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Savior all the day long.  
This is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Savior all the day long.

2 Perfect communion, perfect delight,  
visions of rapture now burst on my sight.  
Angels descending bring from above  
echoes of mercy, whispers of love. [Refrain]

3 Perfect submission, all is at rest.  
I in my Savior am happy and bless'd,  
watching and waiting, looking above,  
filled with his goodness, lost in his love. [Refrain]