

Connsbrook Avenue Congregational Church

Friendship Meeting

30th January 2026

Charlotte Elliott



Next Meeting: 27th February 2pm

Our subject today composed hundreds of hymns during their lifetime, but they are best remembered for one very well-known hymn.

Our hymn book contains only three of her hymns;

745 Christian, seek not yet repose
66 Thou glorious Sun of righteousness
585 Just as I am

Background

Charlotte Elliott was born 18th March, 1789 in Brighton, England.

Her grandfather on her mother's side was Rev Henry Venn. He was a well-known Minister and is one of JC Ryle's subjects in his book 'Five Christian Leaders Of The 18th Century'.

Venn belonged to what was known as the Clapham Sect, a group of Ministers and other believers like William Wilberforce, whose influence brought about the Great Awakening in the 18th Century and the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire.

They met in the Anglican Church, Holy Trinity, in Clapham, which at the time was a small village outside London.

Henry Venn had a number of children and grandchildren who were involved in Christian work in one way or another.

Early Life

Because of her family's position in society, Charlotte grew up in refined and religious circles. She was well educated and had a passion for music, art and poetry.

She had a particular liking for painting portraits.

However, her life was turned upside down in her early thirties. Her health deteriorated to such an extent that she became confined to her bed or the couch for the rest of her life. The exact diagnosis is unclear; it could have been what we call today ME/CFS. With this inactivity came a great despondency, which today we would call depression.

I guess the fact that many of her close family were eagerly serving in Christian work, didn't help her situation.

Because of her illness, she could no longer mix in the circles she once did.

Conversion

Though she came from a Christian family, and met with people in Christian circles, Charlotte didn't become a Christian until she was in her thirties.

The story is told that on one occasion, a well known evangelist from Geneva, Switzerland, was visiting her father. During one evening, Dr Cesar Malan asked Charlotte if she was at peace with God.

Charlotte was quite taken aback that someone should ask her such a question. She resented the question and made the excuse that she did not want to discuss the topic of religion. Dr Malan, didn't want to upset her, and so he changed the subject but said he would pray for her that she would give her life to Jesus and use her talents to serve Him.

Charlotte felt bad about how she had spoken to Dr Malan and after a few days she spoke to him and apologised for her behaviour. She confessed that the question had troubled her but that she wanted to cleanse her life before becoming a Christian.

Dr Malan explained that wasn't necessary, but that she could come to Jesus just as she was. Jesus would accept her just as she was.

Charlotte committed her life to Jesus that day, the 9th May 1822. Little did Dr Malan know the impact his advice to Charlotte to come to Jesus just as she was, would have on her, and indeed the whole world.

Just As I Am

On one occasion, her brother was holding a bazaar to raise money for a school for children of poor clergymen. All her family had helped organise it and had gone to it and Charlotte was left at home alone.

She began to think about the Christian faith and the certainties of her salvation. The words of Dr Malan came into her mind and

she began to pen the words which would eventually become the hymn we know and love today;

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each
spot,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, tho' tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind –
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need in Thee to find –
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

6 Just as I am – Thy love unknown
has broken every barrier down –
now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Her Latter Life

Due to her illness, Charlotte wasn't able to do the things the rest of her family could do, but that didn't mean there was nothing she could do.

She became the editor of a Christian magazine as well as a hymn book which was called The Invalids Hymn Book. 115 of her own hymns were added to this book, including Just As I Am.

She is quoted as saying '*God sees, God guides, God guards me. His grace surrounds me, and His voice continually bids me to be happy and holy in His service just as I am*'.

She died in Brighton, on 22 September 1871, aged 82yrs and was buried alongside her brothers in the churchyard of St Andrew's, Hove.

Just as I am was a favourite hymn of Billy Graham and he would always use this hymn during his rallies. Having preached the Gospel and invited people to come to the front to seek help, the hymn would be played, reminding people to come to Jesus just as they were.

Minister

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