

Christians at Texas State Bible Study

God's Complete Salvation #6

Consecration

Scripture Reading:

1 Cor. 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? **20** For you have been bought with a price. So then glorify God in your body.

Rom. 14:8 For whether we live, we live to the Lord, and whether we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore whether we live or we die, we are the Lord's.

Rom. 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 Cor. 5:14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; **15** And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.

Num. 28:2 Command the children of Israel and say to them, My offering, My food for My offerings by fire of a satisfying fragrance to Me, you shall be careful to present to Me at its appointed time. **3** And you shall say to them, This is the offering by fire which you shall present to Jehovah: two male lambs a year old without blemish each day as a continual burnt offering.

Eph. 2:10 For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we would walk in them.

Isa. 64:8 But now, Jehovah, You are our Father; / We are the clay; and You, our Potter; / And all of us are the work of Your hand.

Lev. 1:9 But its inward parts and its legs he shall wash with water. Then the priest shall burn the whole on the altar, as a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a satisfying fragrance to Jehovah.

CONSECRATION

After we have been born again, there is still much work for God to do in our lives, and there is also much service that we can render to God. But this calls for a complete surrender of our lives to Him. We need to allow Him to do His work in us; we need to allow Him to use us; and we need to allow Him to lead us over the stretch of road that lies ahead. All this demands an utter consecration of our lives to Him. It amounts to giving our consent to His working in us, to His using us, and to His directing of our ways. In dealing with inanimate objects, God does not require their surrender; but in dealing with living men and women, He needs to gain our consent before He can work in us, or use us, or direct our paths.

If we want to fill a bottle with medicine, the procedure is perfectly straightforward. We simply take up a bottle and pour in the medicine. But we who are parents know that when we want to give medicine to a child, it is quite troublesome. We have to exhort, entreat, and even offer some reward to the child. If that fails, we have to call the older brother or sister, and put the child on the bed, because everyone must help to hold down the child while a little medicine is poured in.

But, brothers and sisters, God does not deal with us as we parents deal with our children. If we do not want Him to do His work in us, He waits. He is extremely patient. We parents may use compulsion with our children, but God waits for our consent. Our consecration is our consent.

In the case of very many Christians, a long time elapses after their new birth before you see any evidence of their really having advanced in the way of God. After a period of perhaps ten years, you still find them more or less where they were before—clearly born again, possibly having acquired a certain amount of doctrinal knowledge, perhaps even actively engaged in a certain amount of “church work,” but as far as true spiritual values are concerned, no further on than they were at the time of their new birth. The explanation is that there has been no handing over of their life to God. There has been no

time in their history when they have had a thoroughgoing transaction with God and have definitely said to Him: "I want to be in Your hands for You to work in me and through me and for You to lead me in Your way." Everyone who wishes to serve God must have such a transaction with Him. Only in the measure in which we allow Him to work *in* us shall we be able truly to work *for* Him. Only to the extent to which we have been *laid hold of* by Him can we be *used* by Him.

Consecration is a favorite theme with many preachers. Scarcely anywhere is there a series of devotional meetings without the subject of consecration being dealt with. In many instances, however, the emphasis is on man offering himself to God for the ministry. The consecration of which we are speaking here has no such emphasis. If you have such a concept, we trust you will set it aside.

(1) THE BASIS OF CONSECRATION

When anything of consequence is undertaken by God or man, the basis of such an undertaking needs to be clear. Now this matter of consecration is one of supreme importance; therefore, it must rest on a solid foundation. If God requires that we surrender ourselves to Him, on what does He base His requirement? He must have ground for requiring our surrender, and we in turn must have ground for surrendering ourselves to Him. The Bible shows that the question of consecration is settled on the ground of purchase. "Ye are not your own," says the Word in one place, "For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:20). And elsewhere it says: "Whether we live, we live to the Lord, or if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8). The Bible speaks also of our being God's "bondslaves." A bondslave is one over whom his master has full rights because of his having bought him. The term "bondslave" does not sound particularly pleasant, but we who have experienced the grace of the Lord know the sweetness of being His bondslaves (Exo. 21).

The Lord has purchased us with a great price so that now no one of us has a right to himself. The authority over our lives was given into His hands by right of purchase. It is on this basis that He claims our surrender. At great cost, even at the cost of the precious blood of His Son, God has bought us for Himself. By virtue of His having bought us, the authority over our lives is neither the world's nor our own; it is His. He has, therefore, clear ground to require that we hand ourselves over to Him.

And from our side, since we were bought by Him, if we do not hand ourselves over to Him, we are acting like runaway slaves. We are like Onesimus, whom Paul sent back to his master Philemon. Many Christians, right up to the present day, are runaway slaves. The Lord has established His rights over them by redemption, yet they refuse to recognize His legal claims. He has paid the price, but they will not let Him take possession of what is His own. This amounts to an offense against the law of the universe. We must settle this matter of God's legal claim upon us by handing ourselves over to Him.

The sound basis of consecration is a legal one. Our consecration is not based on the constraints of love, as many Christians think. They offer themselves to or withhold themselves from the Lord according as they sense His love or fail to sense it. But in the sight of God, our consecration is not an optional matter; its legal basis is established. You have been bought as His bondslave, and whether you like it or not, you belong to Him. The right to your life is not yours, but His, for He has acquired it by purchase.

(2) THE MOTIVE POWER OF CONSECRATION

We have just said that love is not the basis of consecration. But love is its motive power. There are slaves who realize that the authority over their lives is in the hand of their masters, and they clench their teeth in bitterness of soul to serve them. They have no love for those who own them. But you may remember that we are told in Exodus 21 of a slave who at the end of six years' service could have become a free man, but he declared, "I love my master...I will not go out free" (v. 5). Thereupon his master led him to the doorpost and bored his ear with an awl. By submitting to this, the slave said in effect, "For love of my master I want to be his slave forever." He could have entered into liberty, but for love's sake he repudiated his freedom. This is true consecration.

Consecration has a basis; consecration has also a motive power. The basis is God's redemption; the motive power is God's love. There is a verse which says, "I beg you...through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God" (Rom. 12:1). And another which says, "The love of Christ constrains us" (2 Cor. 5:14a). But why should we yield to the constraint of love? Because "One died on behalf of all; therefore all died; and He died on behalf of all, that those who live may no longer live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and has been raised" (2 Cor. 5:14b-15). Everyone who has had a true experience of consecration has at least once, but possibly many times, known the touch of the love of God. Without that touch of His love upon us, consecration is a bitter thing; in fact, it is hardly a possibility. The security of our consecration depends upon its basis; but the vitality and sweetness of our consecration depends on its motive power, i.e., the love of God. Consecration is the effect of the Lord's touch upon a life. You do not need to plead with a person who has known the Lord's love to surrender to Him. Surrender is spontaneous.

Some brothers and sisters, from their conversion right up to the present day, have never really known the love of God. So the question of their consecration has never been settled. Throughout the two thousand years of church history, all those in

and through whom He has specially wrought are those who, at least once in their lifetime, have felt the impact of His love. When His love touched them, they had no alternative but to fall before Him and offer their all to Him. Their reaction was similar to that expressed in the hymn:

“When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

When we really meet the love of God, we feel that our all must be offered up to Him; yet at the same time we feel that our richest offering is as refuse in the light of His love. Let but the love of God touch us and consecration will become spontaneous.

We know that God’s love and the Lord Jesus are inseparable. Our Lord is the embodiment of the love of God; so it happens that everyone who really meets the love of God becomes aware of the beauty of the Lord Jesus. One who had such an experience wrote:

“What has stripped the seeming beauty
From the idols of the earth?
Not a sense of right or duty,
But the sight of peerless worth.”

All who have had a true experience of consecration have at least tasted something of the Lord’s love, for this love is its motive power. When you recognize what the precious blood has purchased, you will have to plant your two feet firmly on the ground of that purchase and say, “Lord, I belong to You. There is no solid ground in the universe for me to stand on but the ground of Your redemption. I am Your redeemed bondsman.” This is the basis of consecration, and it is a secure basis. But because of the constraint of love we can add, “I am not only Yours by right, I am willingly Yours. I love my Master; I will not go out free.” Even if the Lord were willing to release me today, I should say, “I love my Master because of His love for me, and I do not want my freedom. I wish to be His bondsman forever.”

When you meet some brothers and sisters, there is always a freshness about them because they are always under the constraint of the Lord’s love. In Madame Guyon’s biography you read that she was always renewing her marriage vows—i.e., her love-relationship with the Lord was always fresh. Hers was a living consecration, because the motive power of consecration was never lacking. The basis of consecration is a question of security; the motive power of consecration is a question of vitality. The first is a question of purchase; the second is a question of love’s constraint.

(3) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSECRATION

But what, after all, is the significance of consecration? The Bible offers a clear answer: “Present your bodies a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1). Our consecration does not mean that we become preachers; it means that we become a sacrifice. The sacrifice to which the Apostle here refers is the burnt offering which was offered as a sweet savor to God. It was His food.

What is food? Man’s food is that which satisfies man; God’s food is that which satisfies God. But what was this burnt offering? The Old Testament explains clearly. It might have been an ox that normally plowed a field or pulled a cart; but one day this ox was transferred from its original environment into a totally different realm. It was killed, it was flayed, it was cut in pieces, it was washed, it was placed on the altar; and if it was acceptable to God, fire consumed it to ashes. Ashes—that is the last point to which anything can be reduced; it is the end of everything. But please note, it was when the ox was completely reduced to ashes on the altar that it ascended to God as a sweet savor and provided His heart satisfaction.

I trust you will remember that your consecration to God does not mean that you become preachers or workers, or that you engage in any sort of Christian activity; it means that you become a sacrifice to God. Anything offered to God in Old Testament times experienced a change of sphere and a change of use. Whatever place you may have occupied before your consecration is different after your consecration because your place is on the altar. Whatever your particular use in the world before your consecration, it is now different, because your use now is to provide food for God, to provide Him with heart satisfaction.

Examine the history of the church and see how many there have been who, before they met the impact of God’s love, were like powerful oxen out in the world plowing great fields or pulling huge carts; but when the love of God laid hold of them,

they were at once on the altar, while their friends and relatives bemoaned the tragic waste. Many people with great gifts and bright prospects have wrecked themselves on the altar. And why? To provide food for God, to bring satisfaction to His heart. What God wants above all else is man. He wants *you*, and when you are reduced to ashes on the altar, that will be the time when a sweet savor will ascend to Him, and He will be satisfied in you. Brothers and sisters, that is the significance of consecration.

(4) THE PURPOSE OF CONSECRATION

We have just explained that the significance of consecration is the offering of oneself as a sacrifice to God for His satisfaction. But the New Testament sacrifice, in contrast to the Old, is a “living sacrifice.” Wherever a real consecration to God has taken place, His purpose comes into evidence in the life consecrated to Him. That life becomes active for God. Our being *for* God is based on our having offered ourselves *to* God. If we have not presented ourselves as a sacrifice *to* Him, we shall never be able to do anything *for* Him. Only those who have been reduced to nothingness on the altar can serve Him acceptably.

One of the troubles in the Christianity of today is that numbers of Christians who have never allowed God to do His work *in* them want to devote themselves to work *for* Him. If Christians offer themselves to work for God without having first allowed Him to do His work in them, trouble will surely follow. Things would not turn out so badly if they were not too earnest; but if they were really earnest, the result would be that a hundred or so would soon be divided into ten different groups. The Christianity of today does not lack enthusiastic workers, but the church lacks men and women who have first been reduced to ashes on the altar of God and thereafter have become of use to Him.

For the almost forty years of our history, we fellow-workers who have borne the main burden of the work have been able to keep together because, though we have not always seen eye to eye on points of doctrine, we have all—to some extent at least—learned one lesson, i.e., to let God work. Before taking in hand any work for Him, we have first let Him take us in hand, and thereafter we have undertaken the work. We dare not say that we have had no differences of opinion (sometimes they have been quite pronounced); but we can conscientiously say that everyone has learned something of what it means to be on the altar for God’s satisfaction. For this reason we have not gotten into difficulty even when we have differed in our doctrinal viewpoint.

When we present ourselves to the Lord, we want to remember that the significance of our consecration is that we are a sacrifice to God. He wants us to be a “living sacrifice,” to live for Him and work for Him. Then the doing will not be our doing, but His doing through us.

(5) THE RESULT OF CONSECRATION

Brothers and sisters, I wish to tell you that the result of consecration is that all our prospects are cut off. True consecration not only ends all worldly prospects; it also ends all prospects in the Christian world. And it will be put to the test by the Christian world as well as by the non-Christian world. You will be tested by a Christianity where it is possible to be an evangelist of worldwide reputation, or a doctor of divinity. My young brothers and sisters, I hope very many of you will become truly useful men and women in the hands of the Lord, but let me warn you of a great snare that lies ahead of you—the snare of fame in the Christian world.

While I was in Manila recently, a group of keen young people pressed me to have a period of fellowship with them each Lord’s Day afternoon. Some of them were graduates of Eastern universities; others had returned from study abroad. At the outset I said to them, “I am not going to deceive you; I want to tell you the truth. In all the universe no one wrecks lives like Jesus Christ. During the past two thousand years I do not know how many young people have had their prospects shattered by Him. If I were to tell you what splendid prospects you have as Christians, I would be misleading you. Rather, let me tell you that Jesus of Nazareth wrecks the lives of all who follow Him.” Brothers and sisters, do not misunderstand me when I say that there is no place for natural ambition in anyone whose life has been really handed over to God—no future in the non-Christian world. Dare you go this way?

I trust you will test yourselves on the five points we have mentioned. What is the basis of my consecration? Is it the fact that Christ has bought me? And what is the motive power of my consecration? Is it the constraint of the Lord’s love? And what is its significance? Is it that I as a sacrifice to God may become food for His satisfaction? And is its purpose that of giving Him an opportunity to do as He wills in me, so that I may be able to do a little for Him? And has my consecration banished all expectations for this life?

Test yourselves on these five points and see where you really stand in the matter of consecration. I trust you will be faithful to look up the Scriptures on which our statements are based. Should you come short on any point, you can trust the grace of the Lord to make good what is lacking.

*** Ministry portions from Living Stream Ministry. Verses from Recovery Version of Bible.**