

## CONSECRATION (9)

It might be good to stress several points just here. (1) Never was a believer brought into healthy spiritual maturity by means of pressure meetings, and constant exhortation, nor before he was prepared by the Spirit. (2) Healthy progress is based upon the apprehension, understanding and appropriation of the truths in Christ that make for real growth. (3) The experiential aspect of all truth, and especially these so-called deeper truths, is closed to all but the needy heart. Until one is aware of his need to progress spiritually, he will never be brought beyond the birth truths -- a mere babe in Christ. "Therefore leaving the elementary instruction about the Christ, let us advance to mature manhood and not be continually re-laying a foundation of repentance from lifeless works and of faith in God" (Hebrews 6:1, Amplified).

This subject of consecration seems to be badly misunderstood by so many believers. Many, especially those young in the Lord, have been victimized time and time again in this matter of surrender, or commitment. The bludgeon most commonly used is: "The Lord Jesus gave His all for you, now the least you can do is give your all for Him!" The believer is exhorted and pressured to consecrate, surrender, commit his life to Christ on the basis of his love and gratitude for what has been done on his behalf at Calvary.

How often the average congregation is put through this routine. How often the individual believer is maneuvered down front to consecrate and re-consecrate, surrender and re-surrender, commit and re-commit himself to Christ! Why is it that after awhile the believer comes to dread such meetings and messages? Well, there are a number of reasons for all this frustration, floundering and failure; and, praise the Lord, there are scriptural answers available to all who need and want them.

First of all, it is utterly futile to expect a believer, by means of consecration, surrender, or commitment, to step from his ground of substitution (Romans 3-5), on to that of the deeper truths in Romans 8 and 12:1.

There is the all-important area of identification truth in Romans 6 and 7 that cannot be skipped over. Every hungry-hearted Christian yearns to be fully consecrated and conditioned for effective life and service. And from the very outset, until hard experience teaches him otherwise, the well-meaning believer thinks that since he has the will to obey God and to be what He intends for him, he should attempt to carry it out through personal consecrated effort with His help. He seeks to struggle forward via the love motive, i.e., He did for me, so I must do for Him.

The following two thoughts by Andrew Murray will help here. "A superficial acquaintance with God's plan leads to the view that while justification is God's work, by faith in Christ, sanctification (growth) is our work, to be performed under the influence of the gratitude we feel for the deliverance we have experienced, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit.

But the earnest Christian soon finds how little gratitude can supply the power. When he thinks that more prayer will supply it, he finds that, indispensable as prayer is, it is not enough. Often the believer struggles hopelessly for years, until he listens to the teaching of the Spirit, as He glorifies Christ again, and reveals Christ, our Sanctification, to be appropriated by faith alone."

"God works to will, and He is ready to work to do (Philippians 2:13), but, alas! many Christians misunderstand this. They think because they have the will it is enough, and that now they are able to do. This is not so. The new will is a permanent gift, an attribute of the new nature. The power to do is not a permanent gift, but must be each moment received from the Holy Spirit. It is the man who is conscious of his own impotence as a believer who will learn that by the Holy Spirit he can lead a holy life." Now and then one is called upon to speak out against something that is good, in order to present His best. The love-motive from which to live the Christian life and serve the Lord is good, it is high, but it is not adequate -- especially because it is not the motivation underwritten by Him.

As growing Christians, it is time for us to see the necessity of going beyond the love-motive to the life motive. "For to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21a). Our consecration, surrender, or commitment will never hold up if it is our responding to Him from any other motivation than the response of His life in us. Yielding to Him on any different basis will simply amount to our trying to live for Him in the self-life. And even if that were possible He could never accept it, since in that realm there dwelleth no good thing (Romans 7:18); plus the fact that He has already taken the old life to the cross and crucified it (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; 2 Timothy 2:11; 1 Peter 2:24, etc.).

J. C. Metcalfe sees both the problem and the answer: "The modern teaching of consecration, which is tantamount to the consecration of the 'old man,' seeks to bypass the death sentence and, therefore, only leads to frustration and failure. When, however, you and I are prepared, in simple humility, to make the FACT of our death with Christ our daily basis of life and service, there is nothing that can prevent the uprising and outflow of new life, and meet the need of thirsty souls around us."

Here is the crux of the matter. The question is, Which life is to be consecrated to Him, the old self-life, or the new Christ-life? God can accept absolutely nothing from the old -- He sees and acknowledges only that which is centered in His son, Who is our Life. Hence God has but one stipulation for consecration: "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead" (Romans 6:13). This is our only ground, and from this platform we are to count ourselves dead unto sin, self, the law, the world, and alive unto God in Christ Risen -- to walk in "newness of life," "risen life" (Romans 6:11,4b).

"Present yourselves unto God as alive from the dead' (Romans 6:13 RV). This is the true place of consecration. For believers to 'consecrate themselves to God' ere they have learnt their union with Christ in death and resurrection (identification) is only to present to God the

members of the natural man, which He cannot accept. Only those 'alive from the dead' -- that is, having appropriated fully their likeness with Him in death -- are bidden to present their members as instruments unto God." --J. P-L.

"God asks us to present our bodies as living sacrifices to Him (Romans 12:1). Until we have done this, there is nothing else we can do. Notice this exhortation comes after Romans six. There is a reason for this order -- crucifixion comes before consecration. Uncrucified self refuses to be consecrated. This is why so many people with all sincerity walk down the aisles again and again, consecrating uncrucified self to God." --H. Duncan. This is why the identification truths must be carefully and thoroughly presented, ultimately understood, and their reality entered into. We cannot even get as far as consecration without them! Many feel that identification is an 'emphasis,' an interesting subject ministered at a few Deeper Life Conferences, and Keswick Conventions. But these truths are not peripheral; they are foundational. "The sixth of Romans is not an aspect of the truth, but the foundation truth upon which every believer must stand to know anything about victory." --DeVerne Fromke. "All the (identification) truths we have learned about the cross, of our death with Christ, our death to sin with Him, of our conformity to death like the grain of wheat falling into the ground to die, are preparatory to the overcoming life. They are the foundation of, and fundamental to it." --J. P-L.

"A careful study of all the Epistles of Paul will show that they are written on the basis of the cross set forth in Romans six -- the fact that God consigns the old fallen Adam-life to the cross, and has nothing to say to it. God deals with all believers on the ground -- 'In Christ you died.' But the Church of Christ, as a whole, ignores this fact. It treats the fallen creation (self-life) as capable of improvement, and the meaning of the cross bringing to death the old Adam race as fallen beyond repair, is thus nullified." --Fromke