

Our Life of Consecration

*“My son, give me
thine heart.”* **CONSECRATION, AS A GEN-**

—Proverbs 23:26 eral concept, is not difficult to define. It means simply the full and complete dedication of one's life to the doing of God's will and his service. It has been, and always will be, proper for all of God's intelligent creatures, on whatever plane of existence they may live, to be so dedicated, consecrated, to their Creator. The holy angels have, since their creation, been thus consecrated. The Ancient Worthies, likewise, were so dedicated to God. Jesus, as the pre-human *Logos*, as the man Jesus, and as the glorified Christ, has always been thoroughly consecrated to his Heavenly Father. Mankind also, at the end of Christ's kingdom, after they are fully brought back into harmony with God and pass the test of obedience, will be fully dedicated and consecrated to God—to his will, and his service.

There is something unique, however, about consecration as it pertains to the followers of God since Pentecost, even to the present time. This unique aspect of consecration began with Jesus when, at

the age of thirty, he presented himself to John the Baptist at the river Jordan. Although he was consecrated to God in a general way as the man Jesus long before the age of thirty, a new and special meaning to his consecration came into being at Jordan, centered along three lines. 1) It was then that he voluntarily offered himself up in sacrifice, giving up any earthly hopes he might otherwise have had, shown symbolically in his water immersion by John the Baptist. 2) Having thus offered himself up in sacrifice, he was now considered by God as a New Creature, with a heavenly hope of life, to be proven, trained, and developed for a great future purpose of being man's High Priest in the kingdom, to bring them back from the bondage of sin and death. 3) To assist in accomplishing both the sacrificial aspect of laying down his human life as well as his development as a New Creature, and begotten by God's Holy Spirit and righteous power and influence to be personally directed toward his development and maturity. It is these special aspects of consecration and sacrifice—the development of New Creatures and Spirit begetting—that were opened to the followers of Jesus starting at Pentecost. This unique opportunity of consecration, offered only during this present Gospel Age is still open today.

CONSECRATION IMPLIES STEWARDSHIP

When one gives themselves to the Lord in consecration, they accept the invitation given in our theme text, 'My son, give me thine heart.' The heart, as the seat of our very deepest affections and motivations, when given to God, embodies

giving to him everything that we have—our all. All such have given over their life to God, that he might make them his. Amazingly, though, God does not make us his by miraculously transforming us into a perfect Christian. He, rather, has done something that might at first be considered odd. He gives back to us everything we gave him, but with one vitally important difference. God says, as it were, “I have accepted what you have given me as your all. It now belongs to me. I am the owner of you and everything concerning your life. I am giving evidence of this ownership in that I have now imputed the merit of my son’s sacrifice on your behalf and have justified you in my sight. You have been bought with a price. Now, though I am giving back to you what you gave me, it still belongs to me, but I am making you guardians over these things which you have given me. You now have a stewardship to which you must prove your faithfulness.

“I am giving back to you your job. Perform it the best you can, as if you were working for me. Be careful, though, remembering that it can also become a burden, and can take away valuable time from me if you allow it to become too great a part of your life. I am giving back to you your talents and abilities. I want you to bend their use more toward spiritual things. Use them to serve me and your brethren as much as possible. Use your abilities to spread the comforting message of the Gospel to others. Beware of temptations to use your talents along lines which might foster pride or self-conceit. Remember that, at best, you are but a servant of my son Jesus, and he is your master.

“I am also giving back to you your time and energy. I know you must use a certain amount of these things to supply your temporal needs, but beyond that I encourage you to redeem the time—use the extra minutes or hours you may have day by day to study my Word, engage in meditation and prayer, attend meetings with your brethren, serve and assist them, and involve yourself in some way with the spreading of the wonderful message of the Gospel of the kingdom. Resist the flesh’s tendency to waste inordinate amounts of time on worldly pursuits and interests, even those that would be considered good and wholesome. These are but the pastimes of an hour. I am giving back to you your mind and your character. I want you to work on their development. I want you to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. To do this, you must cultivate the fruits of the spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. At the same time, I want you, to the best of your ability, to rid yourself of the sinful tendencies you have by nature.

“I am even giving back to you your heart, the very essence of what you gave me in consecration. Yes, I have accepted it, and it belongs to me, but I want you to take it back, guard it carefully, to be sure that it remains pure. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it will be the issues of life. I want you to use the acceptable heart desires that you gave me in consecration to motivate you in every aspect of your life. Your heart can be a great source of help to you as you daily fulfill the vows you have made. This is because, even when you may stumble and fail in word or in action to serve

me as you should, your properly conditioned and motivated heart will be counted as making up, in large measure, for your unintentional mistakes and stumblings of word and deed.

“I am giving these things, and everything else you have given me as your all, back to you to be stewards over. In addition, though, I am giving you one more very special and important item. This is not anything you gave me that I am giving back. It is something that only comes directly from me. I am giving you the begettal of my Holy Spirit, my power and influence. It is this special gift that will help you to faithfully carry out your stewardship over all those things I have given back to you. By using this Holy Spirit and submitting to its guiding influence, you will be able to accomplish all things necessary to make your calling and election sure. Without it, the influences of the world, your fallen flesh, and the Adversary will prevent you from being a faithful steward. Continually be filled with my Spirit, though, and you will not fail.”

This stewardship that the Heavenly Father has given all who have dedicated their lives to him embodies in particular the three unique aspects of consecration previously mentioned—sacrifice, the development of the New Creature, and spirit begettal.

SACRIFICE

The first of these, sacrifice, is vitally important from two particular standpoints. First, when one approaches God in consecration, they do so with the understanding that they are giving up, or sacrificing, the earthly life rights they would have otherwise

had under the mediatorial kingdom arrangement which will eventually bless all mankind. These, instead, desire to run for the prize of the High Calling. The Scriptures speak of this as a baptism into the death of Jesus. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death. . . . For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom. 6:4,5) This burial into the death of Jesus is shown in symbol by water baptism. When one is baptized and lowered into the water by the immerser, it symbolizes their sacrificial death as a human being.

Just as water baptism is only a symbol, so one's baptism into Jesus' death is only a beginning. It must be followed up by the constant putting away of the tendencies and desires of the fallen flesh. As Paul continues in Romans 6, verses 6 and 12, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. . . . Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." All who have been baptized into Jesus' death must continually fight against earthly ambition, aims, hopes, and pleasures, realizing that they have given up these things.

Another important aspect of sacrifice is that which has to do with our development as sympathetic high priests. If faithful, we will have the tremendous privilege of sharing in the work of helping mankind up the highway of holiness in the kingdom. To do this, we need to have gone through the same types of experiences, trials, sufferings, and even sorrows, which are common to man. Only

thus will we truly be touched, as Jesus was, with a feeling of the world's infirmities. We should expect, then, to have experiences which try and test our resolve to the Lord. We should rejoice in such experiences, as they are being permitted to develop us into a vessel of special use to him. "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have [its] perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."—James 1:2-4, *New American Standard Bible*

The Apostle Paul sums up our consecration to sacrifice in the familiar and beautiful words of Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Our sacrifice is a 'reasonable service' if we truly love the Lord and desire to be sharers with him in the uplifting of all the families of the earth. What more worthy cause could there be for sacrifice than the opportunity it will bring of assisting God's crowning creation—man—back to the perfection in which he was first created. It is God's plan to do this very thing. How we should rejoice at the prospect of having a part in this and realize that our sacrifice is such a reasonable service.

NEW CREATURES IN CHRIST

The second special aspect of consecration during this present Gospel Age is centered on our development as a New Creature. Paul states, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old

things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (II Cor. 5:17) To be a New Creature first requires that we continue the work, as stated earlier, of putting away the things of the flesh. If one puts away the things of the flesh, its tendencies, desires, actions, words, and thoughts will most likely be replaced with that which is spiritually-centered. Additionally, to the extent one puts aside worldly ambitions, aims, and goals, they will most likely put in their stead heavenly aspirations and desires. In fact, the habit of focusing on heavenly things—in thoughts, words, and actions—will itself help to put down the earthly and fleshly tendencies.

Referring back to Paul’s words in Romans 6, he says in verses 4 and 13, “We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. . . . Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” This newness of life, or New Creature, is also shown in the symbol of water baptism. Just as baptism into water shows, as stated earlier, the true baptism into Jesus’ sacrificial death, being lifted out of the water by the one baptizing shows newness of life as New Creatures in Christ. Paul speaks of this newness and its process of development in the very next verse following the one quoted earlier concerning our sacrifice being a reasonable service. He says, as recorded in Romans 12:2, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the

renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” This ‘renewing of your mind’ is in reality the development of the New Creature—the newness of life spoken of in Romans 6.

In short, those who have made such a consecration have covenanted to develop a Christlike character. That is truly what the New Creature is—the character likeness of our Lord Jesus—which, of course, is the character of God himself. That is what Paul meant when he said to be transformed—take the character that formerly identified itself with us, and transform it, change it, renew it, and rebuild it from scratch, if necessary, into a character which is as fully as possible in harmony with that of our master Jesus. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 2:5

TREASURES IN HEAVEN

One of the best scriptures we can think upon as we consider both our sacrifice of earthly things, and our replacing of them with spiritual hopes, aims, and goals—the development of the New Creature—are these words spoken by our Lord, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt. 6:19-21, *New International Version*) We have the opportunity to store up heavenly treasures in lots of ways: study of God’s Word, prayer and meditation, attending meetings and

assembling with others of ‘like precious faith,’ being a witness of God’s Word to others, being an example of character to those around us, giving a word of comfort and encouragement to those that need it, being of service to our brethren, standing up for the principles of righteousness even at the cost of ridicule and criticism, suffering for righteousness, and many other ways that continually manifest themselves in our experiences. All of these are laid up as heavenly treasures.

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE FROM GOD

But, one might say, “This is a narrow way, it is not easy to sacrifice, it is a challenge to develop as a new creature and attain to the character of Christ. I cannot do this on my own.” This is absolutely correct. We cannot do any of this without help. The third unique aspect of consecration during this present Gospel Age is identified with the special help and assistance God has provided to make it possible for us to be successful, both as to our sacrifice, and as to our development as a New Creature. God, in accepting our consecration, gives us this special assistance through his begetting us with his Holy Spirit. This is nothing less than God’s almighty power and influence, which he has bestowed upon his consecrated people, to guide them, help them, and assist them each step of their narrow-way experience.

A COMFORTER PROMISED

Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as a comforter when he explained to his disciples that it would not be possible for him to be personally with them, to guide them, to comfort them, during their narrow-way

experiences, as he had done for three and one-half years before his death. He said, though, that he would send them another comforter—the Holy Spirit. “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he [it] may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. . . . But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he[it] shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”—John 14:16-18,26

What a fitting description of the Holy Spirit—comforter. It is God’s holy power, his Spirit, which by its guiding and helpful influence, indeed brings us comfort, regardless of the experiences we may go through. It is this same guidance, help, power, influence, and resulting comfort and peace that all the Lord’s truly consecrated have been begotten with during this present Gospel Age. However, for us to truly benefit from the Holy Spirit and receive the resulting comfort and peace, there is one requirement we must follow—we must submit ourselves to the Spirit’s guiding power in our life. To do so will require that we be meek, teachable, and humble, just as Jesus was. Notice these words, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—Matt. 11:28-30

VICTORY THROUGH MEEKNESS AND HUMILITY

As we meekly and humbly submit to the Holy Spirit's influence in our lives, we will gain the necessary victories both in sacrifice as well as in the development of the New Creature. Doing so, we will thus demonstrate our faithfulness to the stewardship that God gave us when we first gave our all to him in consecration, and if faithful in doing so, even unto death, we will receive the reward of glory, honor, and immortality. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."—Rom. 8:14-17

A MOST WONDERFUL DECISION

The most wonderful and best decision any human being can make is that of giving their heart to God in consecration. If we are of those having done so now in this present Gospel Age, we are walking in the narrow way. We are being tested and tried in this way to prove our faithfulness. We also are receiving many blessings from God's hand. We have the wonderful privilege of prayer to the Heavenly Father, and a vast network of brethren, near and far, to whom we can turn for help and support, and from whom we can learn many needed lessons from their examples and experiences which have perhaps preceded ours.

As we continue to walk in the narrow way, God is looking for two primary things as we seek to prove our faithfulness to him. First, he wants our best efforts. He knows we cannot do each and every thing we might desire to do in his service, nor that we can complete every task we set out to do in as full a manner as we would like, but he does require that we put forth our best possible efforts—work hard, work diligently, and not grow weary in well doing. He will count such efforts as complete in his sight with any lack being made up for by the boundless supply of his grace. Secondly, God wants our will, our intent, to think, speak, and act righteously uppermost in our heart through each and every experience. He understands that we are not perfect, and will not be able to bring every thought, word, and deed into full compliance with his perfect standards. God does expect, though, that just as we have given ourselves to him in consecration, thus vowing to give up our will for his, we will continue throughout our life to have our will, our intent, such as Paul expressed in Romans 7:22, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man,” regardless of the mistakes we may make along the way.

CONSECRATION MADE COMPLETE

With hearts thus motivated to put forth our best and most sincere efforts, and as those efforts are directed by a will, a desire, to be faithful unto death, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the privilege of prayer, and the support of our brethren throughout the earth, our consecration can and will be made complete, and the work God has begun in us will have a glorious outcome. As Paul promised,

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 1:6, *NIV*

God’s great love toward his consecrated children is well exemplified in the prayer which Moses offered on behalf of his beloved fellow brethren of Israel. He loved them very much, and was exceedingly patient and long-suffering with them. He desired greatly that they be faithful to their covenant with God, and expressed his great love toward them in this very short, but beautiful, prayer, “The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” (Num. 6:24-26) May these same sentiments be continually felt by all those who have given their hearts, their all, to God in consecration. ■

“Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of.”—Matthew 6:8

Our petitions, our requests, our cries to the Lord, therefore, should be for the holiness of heart, for the filling of his Spirit, for the spiritual food, refreshment, strength; and as for the natural things, he knoweth the way we take and what would be to our best interests as New Creatures. We are to leave this to him: he would not be pleased to see us importuning him for things which he did not give us, for to do so would not be an exemplification of faith in him, but the reverse—an exemplification of doubt, a manifestation of fear that he was forgetting or neglecting his promise to give us the things needful.

—Daily Heavenly Manna, November 13

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

QUESTION: Please explain this scripture—"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."—John 8:58

ANSWER: Jesus was speaking of his prehuman existence, as recorded in Proverbs, saying, "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

"When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men."—Prov. 8:22-31

The Apostle Paul also spoke concerning Jesus, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things

were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”—Col. 1:15-17

The Apostle John referred to Jesus in his prehu-man existence as the Word [Greek, *Logos*]. The literal translation of the Greek text reads, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was [a] God. The same was in the beginning with [the] God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”—John 1:1-3

The relationship between Jesus as the ‘Word’ and his Heavenly Father is also indicated in the scriptural record of creation by the use of the pronouns ‘us’ and ‘our.’ The account reads, “God said, Let us make man in our image, after our like-ness.”—Gen. 1:26

These scriptures show that Jesus—the Word—was the first and only direct creation of God. He was associated with the Father in all of the wonderful works of creation—“the beginning of the creation of God.”—Rev. 3:14 ■