

# Abandonment or Consecration

by Harmon A. Baldwin

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*The sermon explores the necessity of abandoning oneself to God for complete sanctification and a pure relationship with Him.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:10, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 12:1, Galatians 2:20, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Entire Sanctification", "Spiritual Renewal"

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## Description

Harmon A. Baldwin preaches about the importance of understanding the requirements of God by examining the seeking soul's condition, the nature of the experience sought, and the relationship with God before and after being cleansed from sin. The seeking soul's contract with God for pardon is complete in will but lacks purity in the heart due to involuntary sinful elements. The soul seeks complete conformity to God's nature, desiring a heart free from inordinate affections and fully centered on God. Through abandonment to God, the seeker can experience entire sanctification, being filled with God's fullness and made perfect in love, without any hindrance to God's will.

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## Transcript

In order to understand properly the requirements of God at this juncture it will be well to find out three things: (1) The condition of the seeking soul, (2) the nature of the experience he is seeking, and (3) the relation to God he now sustains and will sustain when cleansed from all sin.

First, the contract made with God by the seeker for pardon is complete, so far as the will and voluntary conditions are concerned. Its only lack is in the fact that the heart is unclean, the nature of sin causing involuntary movements contrary to the love of God. These involuntary movements or elements in the soul cause undue attachments to legitimate objects, as well as sinful leanings toward wrong objects. To illustrate: Conjugal love in itself is always right, but in the unclean soul there is a selfish or sensual element that vitiates it. Right affections never interfere with the pure love of God, but this sinful element of the soul causes the man involuntarily to place his wife either in some sense in the place that belongs to God, or to hold her in less esteem than he ought. The same principle is applicable to other matters. This is the real condition of the seeking soul.

The second point necessary to settle is the nature of the experience for which the soul struggles. The answer to this inquiry is involved negatively in the foregoing paragraph. He seeks entire conformity to the nature of God; or, rather, he seeks in its fullness the nature which God designs him to possess. He is already "set apart," but he sees an element in his heart that pollutes the sacrifice. Over this he mourns,

and from this he seeks deliverance. He cries,

"'Tis worse than death my God to love,

And not my God alone."

When he gains the goal for which he strives his heart will be all love, with no admixture of inordinate affection a heart so clean that it naturally and without effort is as it should be; a heart which, so far as it rightly understands, loves no object either more or less than it should; which is centered in God, and moves not for one moment from that center. This is the experience he seeks, and which God will give him if he perseveres.

The third question is as to the relation he does now, and will, when cleansed, sustain to God. The justified soul is at peace with God. He asks to know God's will, and when he knows, does it. But he is conscious that in his soul is an element not in harmony with God, and that hinders if it does not fully prevent him from doing God's will. He is God's child, but still has involuntary inward longings for things that are not good for him. The fact is that in the determinations of his will he is all God's property; but there is within an involuntary principle that hinders him from being as completely lost in God's will as he sees he should be. Such is the relation he now sustains to God.

In the experience of entire sanctification this involuntary principle is removed, and the soul is "filled with all the fullness of God," and thereby "made perfect in love." Without a single qualifying condition the man is now God's peculiar treasure; a royal diadem in the hand of his God, without a rival to dispute God's claims upon him. He has thirsted that all his being might be purified and given to God without even involuntary self-clingings or inclinations to wrong; and now he realizes the fulfillment of his desires, and sees that all through his soul he is all God's property only and always God's. Such is the relation he will sustain to God when cleansed.

Since this involuntary principle of the soul is not reached by anything that is done by the seeker for pardon, it must of necessity be reached by a deeper and more penetrating action, and this is found in the abandonment of his entire being to God, that he may do with the individual as seems best in his wisdom and righteousness; and when the seeker thus abandons himself to God, the blood is applied which purges away his inbred uncleanness. The definition of abandon is, "To forsake, or renounce utterly; to give up wholly; desert; quit; leave" (Standard Dictionary). There are absolutely no specifications as to what shall be done with the offering. The whole being is given to God, utterly renounced, and deserted. All, even involuntary claims, are quit, and God can do as he pleases with his property and not hear a single murmur because of his providences.

When praying for pardon the seeker sees that he is wicked and has been used as a tool for the devil and sin. The desire of his heart is that his sins may be forgiven, and that he may be set apart from an unholy to a sacred use. But now, when seeking holiness, he sees that although in God's sight and also in the full purpose of his will he is already sacred property; yet his sacredness has been defiled by the carnal, self life within, and that God has been hindered from having his perfect way. As a consequence, his prayer is that he may be thoroughly purged from inbred sin, to the end that he may serve God perfectly. He is already sacred to God's use, but he desires to be where God can use him as he pleases, and with no inward foe to rival his claims. To this end he surrenders himself to the cross of crucifixion; abandons himself to God without reference to the use God will make of him; determines to quit even trying to dictate to God. His cry is, "O God, remove the thing that has hindered thee from having thy perfect way, and use

me henceforth as thou dost choose, for joy or sorrow, for ease or pain."

Let us look a little deeper into this glorious doctrine of abandonment, and, as we do so, we shall find beautiful things, if we view them from the victory side, but hard things, if viewed from the carnal side. Abandonment is the yielding of the attachments we have had for legitimate objects, -- the wrong bias we have had for them. For instance, the idolatrous attachments one may have for the objects of his domestic love, the unclean leaven which may have polluted his conjugal or parental affections. It may seem to him that these objects of his love will actually go, but on the resurrection side he finds that, instead of this he loves them with a dearer, cleaner love. One must also die to the servile attachments he has had to the opinions of the saints or the creed of his church; must die even to that sensual clinging he has had for spiritual delights, and which would substitute these pleasures for faith in God; for God will have our undivided confidence, and love and service. Some one has said that we must not only die to our sinful self, but also to our righteous self.

Every one who gets a clear view of his own soul will find that, although grace cries for deliverance, there still remains within an element of evil, or a tendency to cling tenaciously to the self life, something that says, "I will not die." Carnality hates death. Grace says it must die, but nature stubbornly refuses. This unwillingness cannot be helped, it is the nature of the man of sin with which we are dealing. You can never expect to be rid of that feeling till you are rid of the carnal mind itself, for it is an essential element of that mind. Here the soul is liable to be tempted in the direction of supposing that, since there is an evil element that thus clings to life, no remedy can be found; but, thank God, there is one -- the blood of Jesus Christ. And we place ourselves in a position to receive its merits by submitting to the crucifixion of self, or by self-abandonment. We voluntarily surrender this clinging, unclean nature to God for death, and that in spite of its own unwillingness. Despite the writhings and strong cries of nature to be permitted to live, in the volition of our will we must hold it to the cross until the fire of the Holy Ghost consumes it. From God's side the remedy is always the blood; but man must cooperate with God in order to obtain this benefit, and he does this by forcing his unwilling heart to stand under the burning rays of "the Sun of Righteousness" until the last remains of sin are withered and driven like fine dust from the heart forever

On this point Madam Guyon says:

For nature [carnality] will make use of everything to sustain its life, as a drowning man will support himself in the water by clinging to the blade of a razor, without adverting to the pain it causes him, if there be nothing else within his reach. \* \* \* \* God has unrelentingly pursued our [carnal] life into its covert hiding places; for so malignant is it, that when hard pressed, it fortifies itself in its refuges, and makes use of the holiest and most reasonable pretexts for existence; but being persecuted and followed into its last retreat, in a few souls (alas how few!) it is obliged to abandon them altogether.

When bringing yourself to this point of abandonment it may be helpful to sing, --

"O God, my heart doth long for thee,

Let me die! Let me die!

Now set my soul at liberty,

Let me die! Let me die!

Die to the trifling things of earth,

They're now to me of little worth,  
My Savior calls -- I'm going forth,  
Let me die! Let me die!  
"Oh, I must die to scoffs and sneers,  
Let me die! Let me die!  
I must be freed from slavish fears,  
Let me die! Let me die!  
So dead that no desire will rise  
To appear good or great or wise  
In any but my Savior's eyes,  
Let me die! Let me die!  
"If Christ would live and reign in me,  
I must die! I must die!  
Like him I crucified must be,  
I must die! I must die!  
Lord, drive the nails, nor heed the groans,  
My flesh may writhe and make its moans,  
But this the way and this alone --  
I must die! I must die!  
"Begin at once to drive the nails,  
Let me die! Let me die!  
Oh, suffer not my heart to fail,  
Let me die! Let me die!  
Jesus, I look to thee for power,  
T' enable me t' endure the hour,  
When crucified by sovereign power,  
I shall die! I shall die!"

There is great need of this separation of the precious from the vile, and the seeker as he reaches this point sees it clearly. He sees how his "time, his strength, his all," has not been as fully God's as it should be; how his most holy actions have not been all for God; how he has loved souls, but not altogether with a disinterested love; how desire of praise or self-aggrandizement has influenced him to some extent all along; and how his heart cries out with Faber, --

"Oh, I could go through life's troubles singing,

Turning earth's night to day,

If self were not so fast around me clinging

To all I do or say.

"O Lord, that I could waste my life for others,

With no ends of my own,

That I could pour myself into my brothers

And live for them alone.

"Such is the life thou livedst, self-abjuring,

Thine own pains never easing,

Our burdens bearing, our just doom enduring,

A life without self-pleasing."

The following from Wesley, is clear as to this imperfection of the service of the justified soul:

But let it be supposed that they continually 'watch and pray,' and so do not enter into this temptation; that they constantly set a watch before the door of their mouth, and keep the door of their lips; suppose they exercise themselves herein, that all their 'conversation may be in grace, seasoned with salt, and meet to minister grace to the hearers;' yet do they not daily slide into useless discourse, notwithstanding all their caution? And even when they endeavor to speak for God, are their words pure, free from unholy mixtures? Do they find nothing wrong in their intention? Do they speak merely to please God, and not partly to please themselves? Is it wholly to do the will of God, and not their own will also? Or, if they begin with a single eye, do they go on 'looking unto Jesus,' and talking with him all the time they are talking with their neighbor? When they are reproofing sin, do they feel no anger or unkind temper to the sinner? When they are instructing the ignorant, do they not find any pride, any self-preference? When they are comforting the afflicted, or provoking one another to love and good works, do they never perceive any inward self commendation as 'Now you have spoken well.' Or any vanity, a desire that others should think so, and esteem them on that account? In some or all of these respects, how much sin cleaves to the best conversation even of believers. \* \* \* \*

And how much of sin, if their conscience is thoroughly awake, may they find cleaving to their actions also? Nay, are there not many of these, which, though they are such as the world would condemn, yet cannot be commended, no, nor excused, if we judge by the word of God? Are there not many of their actions, which,

they themselves know, are not to the glory of God? Many, wherein they did not even aim at this; which were not undertaken with an eye to God? And of those that were, are there not many wherein their eye is not singly fixed on God? Wherein they are doing their own will, at least as much as his, and seeking to please themselves as much, if not more, than to please God? And while they are endeavoring to do good to their neighbor, do they not feel wrong tempers of various kinds? Hence their good actions, so-called, are far from being strictly such; being polluted with such a mixture of evil. \* \* \* \*

If any man is not satisfied with this, if any believe that whoever is justified is able to remove these sins out of his heart and life, let him make the experiment. Let him try whether, by the grace he has already received, he can expel pride, self-will, or inbred sin in general. Let him try whether he can cleanse his words and actions from all mixture of evil; whether he can avoid all uncharitable and unprofitable conversation, with all the sins of omission; and, lastly, whether he can supply the numberless defects which he still finds in himself. Let him not be discouraged by one or two experiments, but repeat the trial again and again; and the longer he tries, the more deeply will he be convinced of his utter helplessness in all these respects.

" \* \* Though we watch and pray ever so much, we cannot wholly cleanse either our hearts or our hands. Most sure we cannot till it shall please the Lord to speak to our hearts again, to speak the second time, Be clean: and then only the leprosy is cleansed. Then only, the evil root, the carnal mind, is destroyed; and inbred sin subsists no more. But if there be no such second change, if there be no instantaneous deliverance after justification, if there be none but a gradual work of God (that there is a gradual work none denies), then we must be content, as well as we can, to remain full of sin till death."

These strong words from Wesley, if taken with the context and in connection with his other writings, do not for a moment allow of willful crookedness in life, thought or intention in the justified soul (such things as some people would make it appear that Wesley allows them to do), not to the least degree, but only go to show that while inherent depravity remains it will, to some extent, color the life and taint the desires. This is what we have called above the "involuntary principle" that hinders the person from being altogether "God's property." It is the "unholy leaven" that "taints the sacrifice." The sacrifice is acceptable to God, because it is the product of a willing heart and is the best the person has to give and all he has to give; but it is not as pleasing as it would be if it were "cleansed from all mixture of evil."

Bishop R. S. Foster, in "Christian Purity," says:

"Would you be holy, you must make up your mind to the crucifixion of every sin; they must be surrendered and given to the cross and spear."

Charles Wesley has also expressed the thought of abandonment in some of his hymns on holiness. The following are instances:

"Eager for thee, I ask, I pant,

So strong the principle divine

Carries me out with sweet constraint,

Till all my hallowed soul is thine:

Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,

And lost in thy immensity."

"Come, Lord, and claim me for thine own;

Savior, thy right assert;

Come, gracious Lord, set up thy throne,

And reign within my heart.

"The day of thy great power I feel,

And pant for liberty;

I loathe myself, deny my will,

And give up all to thee.

"I hate my sins, no longer mine,

For I renounce them, too;

My weakness with thy strength I join;

Thy strength shall all subdue.

"So shall I bless thy pleasing sway,

And, sitting at thy feet,

Thy laws with all my heart obey,

With all my soul submit."

We close this chapter with a few passages from Madam Guyon and Archbishop Fenelon on the subject of abandonment.

God gives us the cross, and the cross gives us God. We may be assured that there is an internal advancement, when there is progress in the way of the cross; abandonment and the cross go hand in hand together. As soon as anything is presented in the form of suffering, and you feel a repugnance, resign yourself immediately to God with respect to it, and give yourself up to him in sacrifice; you will then find, that when the cross arrives, it will not be so very burdensome, because you have yourself desired it. This, however, does not prevent you from feeling its weight, as some have imagined: for when we do not feel the cross we do not suffer. A sensibility of suffering is one of the principal parts of suffering itself.'

" \* \* Suffer not yourselves to be attached to anything, however good it may appear; it is no longer such to you, if it in any measure turns you aside from what God desires of you. For the divine will is preferable to every other good. Shake off, then, all self-interest, and live by faith and abandonment; here it is that genuine faith begins truly to operate."

Thus does the soul ascend to God, by giving up self to the destroying and annihilating power of divine love. This is a state of sacrifice essential to the Christian religion, in which the soul (i. e., self-life in the

soul) suffers itself (because forced by grace coupled to divinity) to be destroyed and annihilated, that it (the soul) may pay homage to the sovereignty of God; as it is written: 'The power of the Lord is great, and he is honored only by the humble.' By the destruction of self we acknowledge the supreme existence of God. We must cease to exist in self, in order that the Spirit of the Eternal Word may exist in us: it is by the giving up of our own life, that we give place to his coming; and in dying to ourselves, he himself lives in us.

We must surrender our whole being to Christ Jesus, and cease to live any longer in ourselves, that he may become our life; that being dead, our life may be hid with Christ in God. But how is it we are to pass into God? In no way but by leaving and forsaking ourselves, that we may be lost in him; and this can be effected only by annihilation, which, being the true prayer of adoration, renders unto God alone, all blessing, honor, glory, and power, forever and ever."

Whoever shall become acquainted with the admirable economy of grace and the wisdom of God in bringing man to a total sacrifice of self, will be filled with delight, and, insensible as he may be, will expire with love. Abandonment \* \* \* is the key to the inner court, so that he who knows truly how to abandon himself will soon become perfect.

The following is from Fenelon, who obtained the experience of holiness under the teachings of Madam Guyon:

The abandonment of evil things, then, consists in refusing them with horror; of good things, in using them with moderation for our necessities, continually studying to retrench all those imaginary wants with which greedy nature would satiate herself.

Having abandoned everything exterior, and which is not self, it remains to complete the sacrifice by renouncing everything interior, including self.

Herein consists true self-abandonment; it is this spirit of self-divesting, this use of ourselves and of ours with a single eye to the movements of God, who alone is the true proprietor of his creatures. You will desire to know, probably, what should be the practice of this renouncement in detail. But I answer that the feeling is no sooner established in the interior of the soul, than God himself will take you by the hand, that you may be exercised in self-renunciation in every event of every day. Self-abandonment is not accomplished by means of painful reflections and continual struggles; it is only by refraining from self-contemplation, and from desiring to master ourselves in our own way, that we lose ourselves in God.

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