

The Cross and Consecration

by L.E. Maxwell

True consecration involves surrendering all to God, including our rights and reserves, and trusting in His perfect satisfaction and sweet savor.

Scripture: Romans 6:6, Romans 12:1

Topics: "Consecration", "Union with Christ"

Description

L.E. Maxwell emphasizes the profound connection between the Cross and true consecration, illustrating how many Christians, despite being justified, struggle with full surrender due to a lack of understanding of their union with Christ. He recounts the journey of a friend who, after realizing the implications of being crucified and risen with Christ, found the foundation for successful consecration. Maxwell draws parallels between the sacrificial system of the Old Testament and the believer's call to present themselves as living sacrifices, urging a complete and ongoing commitment to God. He highlights that true consecration may be a momentary act but is also a lifelong journey, requiring continual binding to the altar of sacrifice. The sermon calls believers to trust in God's perfect will, even in the face of personal loss, and to embrace the life that comes from being united with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Transcript

"God ... hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice" (Ps. 118:27).

THE WRITER has a dear friend in the ministry who, as a young man, tried again and again to give himself fully to the Lord, but without success. He was perfectly sincere, but he continued perfectly miserable. He was one of those many young people who are continually consecrating themselves to the Lord. At length he came to discover that he had missed the very basis of consecration. He found light through God's own "consecration" of the Old Testament priests. When he beheld the blood placed on the priest's ear, on his thumb, on his toe, and saw him sprinkled all over with blood, he came to understand his union with "Christ made sin."

He saw death written all over him. He felt the awful doom and death to which Calvary committed him. He came to understand his identification with Christ. He saw himself one with the Crucified in His death and resurrection. This death-life union changed his whole conception of surrender to Christ and laid the foundations in his life for a successful and abiding consecration. Such an experience is not uncommon among Christians. They have been justified by faith and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But they have not realized the implications of the Cross. In some of our best churches they have been immediately taken from the justification of Romans 5:1 to the truth of consecration as set forth in Romans 12:1, 2. We would not be overcritical in that which is well meant; but to ignore or pass over the teaching and amazing declarations of our union with Christ as set forth in Romans 6 to 8 is not really the, proper approach to consecration. Such a skirting of these underlying truths brought many years of misery to my ministerial friend.

He knew not the way of victory over sinful self. All unconsciously he was attempting in the energy of self to lay his all on the altar. When he came to see that he was already the Lord's through his life-union with Christ--already crucified and risen with Christ, "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord!--he then had a sure basis for presenting himself unto God. At last he had found the blessed secret of success. But let me further illustrate.

When Abraham Lincoln delivered his address at the dedication of the battlefield cemetery in Gettysburg, November 19, 1863, he said: "We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives.... But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate--we cannot consecrate--we cannot hallow--this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. ... It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work . . . to be dedicated to the great task remaining before us."

We speak of Christian consecration. "But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate--we cannot consecrate--we cannot hallow--this ground" of our already redeemed lives. In His laid-down life the Crucified has already "consecrated it (us) far above our poor power to add or detract." Let us fix our eyes upon Christ. We have already been fastened to the Crucified. Let us believe that if we be dead with Him we shall also live with Him. The blessed truths clustering around our death-resurrection union with Christ, as set forth in Romans 6 to 8, lay the basis for a successful consecration, as so clearly set forth in Romans 12:1,2.

Having been so completely redeemed and "accepted in the beloved," Christ now beseeches us by His own infinite and many tender mercies to present our bodies a reasonable, living, holy, acceptable sacrifice to Himself. As we lay our hands upon the sacred and holy head of our Burnt Offering we know (let it be the language of a lively faith) that in Him we are a sweet savor unto God--a sweet savor of perfect obedience, perfect consecration, and perfect sacrifice "far above our poor power to add or detract."

What power! What persuasion! What perfect peace! His is the perfect satisfaction--a sweet savor offering made by fire--ours the sweet privilege of being burned out for Him. Can we not trust Him? Shall we not let Him carry us where He will? O hesitating believer, are we not ready to sign away our rights and reserves for all coming days? Come. Give Him all. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The Lord loves a hilarious giver. Let us launch forth with Him on any uncharted sea.

Those who sail the high seas in treacherous times commit themselves to His Majesty the King: "At your service, Sir, with scaled orders." It was George Whitefield who said: "I give up myself to be a martyr for Him who hung upon the Cross for me. I have thrown myself blind-folded and, I trust, without reserve into His almighty hands." Miss Ahn, that heroic lady of Korea, had argued with God for some seven years against going to the Japanese Diet and warning that nation against persecuting the Christians for refusal to bow at the Shinto shrines.

When she finally yielded to obey God's call, she sold all her possessions and bought a one-way ticket for Tokyo--to do and die. We say that consecration is "for service or sacrifice." To Miss Ahn it was both. Hers would be a trip to death. She bought a one-way ticket, to return nevermore--by love compelled to obey, to go, to do, and, if necessary, to die. Oh, to be so sweetly constrained by Calvary's awful compulsion that we can hold out no longer, can no longer resist its attractive force!

We are drawn to death--with appetites whetted to eat of the Great Sacrifice. Ah, this is life indeed, life more abundant, the life that is hid with Christ in God--"He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." But there is another aspect that is all-important. Frances Ridley Havergal has said: "Full consecration may in one sense be the act of a moment and in another the work of a lifetime. It must be complete to be real, and yet, if real it is always incomplete; a point of rest, and yet a perpetual progression."

Let us not be deceived, we shall often be compelled to say with the Psalmist: "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light (conversion): bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar (consecration)." It will cost us all we have and all we am to keep in this consecrated mind. We shall be forced to cry out again and again as we fear the fire and feel the sacrificial knife, "Bind me, blessed Savior, as a sacrifice--fasten me with Thy cords of constraining love lest I finish my course with shame.

Let me not begin to make provision anywhere for the flesh--let my offering continue to be a burnt offering--a whole burnt offering, yea, a continual burnt offering. Let me never come down from the cross to save myself. Fix me, fasten me, bind me with Thine own cords to Calvary, a continual burnt offering." A missionary friend returned to his field seeking a fresh anointing. He says: "The Lord searched my heart and my possessions to see if anything had become dearer to me than Himself.

'Lovest thou me more than these?'--meaning my wife and boy. I hesitated. I felt as though He had laid before me an execution warrant and was waiting for my signature. There was a terrible fight in my heart: surrender meant death. After a long struggle and by His grace, I made the surrender and I did it with the fullest expectation that this meant the end of their earthly lives. After a few weeks, while returning to our little Japanese house alone, the thought flashed into my mind, 'The boy is sick.'

He was all right when I left home, healthy and well. When I arrived home my wife came to welcome me, and she said, "Gordon is sick." I said, "I knew it, it has come at last." Then there came that agonized struggle, 'Lovest thou me more than the boy?' But I had won the victory. So with a heavy heart I went up to the lad to say goodbye. He lay on his bed, his little white face against the pillow, desperately ill. There I realized that the only surrender which truly counts is the surrender unto death.

I was able to say to God out of a full honesty of heart, "Thy will is best, and I would rather have Thy will than anything on earth". What happened then? It happened with me as with Abraham when he brought his son to the place of surrender unto death on Mount Moriah. God gave him back his boy--and mine." "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."

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