

# What Is the Measure of Your Dedication

by Stephen Olford

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of surrender and dedication to God, highlighting the difference between being saved and being surrendered, and the need to present one's body as a living sacrifice.*

**Duration:** 1:11:45

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:1-12

**Topics:** "Dedication"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a powerful experience of taking communion in a camp setting. He describes the humble elements of bread and wine, symbolizing the self-giving of Jesus Christ. The speaker then shares a personal story of being exchanged for a chicken in a tribal encounter, highlighting the value of human life. He emphasizes the importance of being dedicated to God and living in His will, using Romans 12:1-2 as a basis for surrendering our bodies as a living sacrifice. The sermon concludes with a prayer for strength and determination to remain faithful until the return of Christ.

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## Transcript

My dear Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, it's a tremendous privilege to be here this evening. My heart has been already blessed and enriched by this glorious testimony and the ministry in song. My wife is with me, Heather.

It's the first time she's come to Texas, and she's so impressed I don't think I'll be able to take her home. I want to say, just before I bring you my message, how deeply grateful I am personally, as a minister, as a preacher of the gospel, to men like Howard Butt and Fred Smith, Bill Cody, and other of the associates of this institute, for this amazing concept, and for the ministry and meaning of the institute. All through the years of my preaching experience, I'm 25 now, and especially since I've been a pastor, I've had a growing conviction that there is a need to return to the true interpretation of Ephesians 4, where we read that when Christ rose from the dead and went up on high, he gave gifts unto the church, the apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, the pastor, the teacher.

Very often we stop there, but there is no real stop there. The text goes right on to say, what for? For the edification of the saints unto the work of serving. And I believe ministers and evangelists and pastors alike have made a great mistake in failing to recognize that the force of the church throughout the ages has been through the instrumentality of lay folk.

When I read the Acts of the Apostles and see the spread of the gospel, how that those who went everywhere preaching the gospel were the lay folk since the apostles remained at Jerusalem, and how churches sprung up such as Antioch, which became the great mystery church that sent forth that mighty man, Paul, and Barnabas, and later Silas, I am more and more convinced that what we need throughout our land today are institutes such as this. And I thank God for this institute, and I thank God for its influence, and I thank God tonight for the privilege of ministering to you folk in this august congregation. I wanted to say that, and I say it very sincerely, because for weeks I've been praying about this night and this institute this year, and just thank God to see this sea of faces representing people committed to evangelism and lay work within the church and through the church in industry, in politics, in education, and what have you.

It's also a tremendous privilege to be sharing the platform tonight with Bobby Richardson, how I thank God for this young man and his dear wife. Oh, he's got a wonderful wife, in case you didn't know it. A very sweet saint of God, and I think one of the highlights of my experience in baseball, for I know very little about baseball really, except what I've learned from my boys, I know a lot about cricket, but not very much about baseball.

But one of the highlights of my baseball experience was when Bobby Richardson, bless his heart, invited my two boys, Jonathan and David, and their wonderful friends, Jonathan and David, down to the Yankee Stadium, and believe it or not, he took them down into the dugout. Yes, and he, Jonathan and David, actually watched a workout. And then right through the dressing rooms, saw the old bandages, a poor old Mickey Mantle there, and everything.

And then they were given a bat each and a ball, and I'm telling you, that's hung up in that room there, almost worshipped every night. And the influence that this young man here has had on my two boys, I want to publicly testify to, and thank God for the impact of an athlete who knows the Savior and has made Jesus Christ Lord of his life. The impact that he has had on my two boys.

In fact, David, the little one, knows so much about baseball that he just sends me around in circles. I'll never forget being down at Ocean City for a holiday with my wife and the two boys, and we went to a Methodist church in the morning, Sunday morning, a good Baptist to a Methodist church, all right? That's fine. And the song leader got up, just like our beloved Cliff Barrows here, and what a wonderful joy to be with these dear men, this team that God is so honored and blessed.

The song leader shouted out the first hymn. He came up to the microphone like this, and he said, I think it was, I hope the, I hope the number's right, but doesn't matter anyway, came up and he said, 32! My little boy looked up and said, Elston Howard. So I'm telling you, we get baseball for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and supper.

It's just a wonderful experience to a father, and I just thank God for Bobby Richardson, and when I sat in one of those little seats way up there in the Yankee Stadium and saw the way he was honored, and why he was leaving baseball, he may not know it, but right there I bowed my head and I prayed, O Lord, use this man, cover him with the precious blood, fill him with thy spirit, and use him to call the youth of our nation back to God. And I believe God has a wonderful ministry for our dear friend Bobby Richardson. Well, now tonight I want to follow that testimony, and I want to bring you to a text that's been so heavy upon my heart that it's going to take a long time to expound.

I hope you're here until three o'clock tomorrow morning. I'm going to try and behave myself, but I do have something to say to you, and my heart's very full, and especially as I've heard these gracious words from our dear chairman, Brother Fred Smith. God bless him and his leadership.

Will you turn with me to the epistle of Paul to the Romans? Romans chapter 12, and we're going to take those first two verses. Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. Many of you will know that Paul reaches a tremendous climax in chapter 8. There is a sense in which 9, 10, and 11 form a sort of parenthesis, though without a shadow of a doubt it has its right place in the unfolding of God's theme of righteousness, as seen in this epistle, righteousness especially in relation to the Jews. But at the end of chapter 7, we read those glorious words, for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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. And 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. Dear Lord, speak to us, we pray thee, as we hush our hearts in thy presence.

Eclipse the instrument, the servant, the channel, by the glory of thine own outshining. And bring home to our waiting hungry hearts that word which thou shalt speak through the holy scriptures. Make this a night of deep dedication to thy blessed self.

We ask it for thy name's sake. Amen. 12.2 As pastor of a city church, trying to keep up to date with all the reading, to all the trends in theology, all the cross currents in modern life, I am well aware of some of the problems and difficulties and situations that you've been discussing in your seminars.

We have very many voices in the world today, those who call for new theological dialogue, those who call for social concern and action commensurate. We have many who ask, what is the church doing about world missions? There are many who are asking the question, is the new morality, after all, not the answer? We've been too tight and stringent in the past. All this business about absolutism is a lot of nonsense for our day.

Let's get down to relative values and let's get down to situational ethics and the lot of it. And so the trends and so the voices come before us. And as one stands behind the sacred desk, looks into the faces of professional men as you are here, families representing the cross section of society, I ask myself a question again and again in my study.

And as I look into the faces of men and women, what is it that God is after in our generation? What is it that's ultimately going to cut ice, whether it's in the lecture room, or the science laboratory, or over there in industry, or as a building contractor, or as a politician? What ultimately is going to cut ice? Is it what I say or what I am? And I've come to see again and again from Genesis to Revelation in a way that's searching and searing my soul, that God's far more interested in what I am than in what I do. And in fact, if what I am doesn't meet His holy requirements, what I do is worthless. My burden tonight is, what kind of a man are you? What kind of a woman are you? What is the measure of your dedication to this God with whom we have to do in Jesus Christ? It's one thing to be saved, and that's a good old-fashioned word, and don't dispute it.

It's found everywhere in the Scriptures, and it's not archaic, it's not obsolete. We're not nebulous when we talk about being saved, delivered, made whole, made healthy, rightly orientated to God and to man. It's one thing to be saved.

And there are tens of thousands of believers today who are honestly saved. I trust everyone here in this room tonight is saved. But I've discovered there's a great difference between being saved, as the Bible teaches it, and being really surrendered.

There's a difference between being saved and being surrendered. And I know no passage in the Bible that speaks more penetratingly to my own soul on this doctrine of surrender, of dedication, than the two verses in Romans chapter 12. Paul, of course, has been dealing with the whole doctrine of righteousness, as we've already observed.

He's dealt with salvation. He's dealt with sanctification, progressive sanctification. But he comes to this place of surrender, and he says these words, I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world, but be transfigured, transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Now, what does this mean? What does that mean to you? What does this mean to me? Very simply, I want us to look at it in three ways tonight. First and foremost, I want us to see that this is God's call to a divine obligation in surrender.

It's a divine obligation in surrender. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies. Paul traces this obligation to two streams.

One I'm going to call the revelation of God's love, the other the expectation of God's love. I beseech you, he says, by the mercies of God. Now, mercy, mercy is love in action, extended to an inferior.

When God stoops from heaven, the transcendent God stoops into the human stream. God contracts to the measure of a woman's womb. God comes down to meet me in mercy, to find me in my lowest state, and to save me, deliver me, sanctify me, glorify me, justify me.

When God does that, that's mercy. He says, Paul, it isn't even mercy in the singular, it's mercy in the plural. I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, the mercies of God.

And, of course, we haven't time tonight to go through the epistle to just recount those mercies. He unbears the heart of God in chapter after chapter. We're brought low before the cross, in utter bankruptcy and brokenness, as we look into the very heart of God as revealed in Christ, and he reaches that mighty climax, as you know, we read it just now.

I am persuaded that there's nothing, nothing, he says, death, life, angels, principalities, powers, height, depth, any other creature shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. There is therefore now no condemnation. The chapter begins, there is therefore now no separation.

The chapter concludes, and all between, nothing but mercy, nothing but mercy. When I look into the face of an intelligent businessman, an academic man, or into the face of a young person who's been at least for a measure under the sound of the word, and there's no sense of obligation to give everything to Jesus Christ, I know they've never been to Calvary. When my brother man was singing that solo just now, oh, I

said, Lord Jesus, thank you, thank you.

That's the very word I needed to start me off tonight. Do I know anything of Calvary? Has Calvary be made real to me? If Calvary is a reality, if God has truly broken through in Calvary to me, then there's no sacrifice too great for me to make for him. That's the language of C.T. Studd, you remember.

He made it the motto of his great mission. If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice is too great for me to make for him. The revelation of God's love, I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies, the mercies of God.

What does Calvary mean to you? What does Calvary mean to you? But not only the revelation of God's love here, but the expectation of God's love. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies. It's your reasonable service, your spiritual mode of worship.

It's the way of response, your reasonable service, the expectation of love. You see, love demands a response. It's in the very nature of love to demand a response.

The greatest sin of the universe is unrequited love. Let me repeat that. The greatest sin in the universe is unrequited love.

If I appreciate the love of God in any measure whatsoever, I must reciprocate it at least to that same measure. Some of you know my background. I'm the son of missionaries.

I was born in the heart of Central Africa. I lived 17 years of my life in Portuguese West Africa. I can never think of this matter of the love of God without being reminded of a very vivid, vivid incident that occurred just about my teenage years.

It must have been about 14, 15. It was a Sunday morning, eight o'clock. Great conference had come to conclusion, and the terminating act was Holy Communion.

And I can see it now mentally, the little camp table there, a few wafers baked on an open fire by my own mother, dried raisins put into hot water, crushed and strained through a handkerchief. That was the wine. Great sea of faces.

We'd bowed very quietly, and we'd taken the bread, and we'd taken the wine in remembrance of our precious Lord. My father had ministered the word, and somehow hearts had been broken in God's presence, just broken, quiet weeping under those trees, the birds chirping away there, the blue sky, the sun beginning to rise higher and higher every moment. As the benediction was pronounced, there was a deadly hush.

A man got up. He lifted his hand in the old Achokwe style, and he said, White man, Gunner, may I say a word? May I say a word? Father said, Speak on. Half turning to the missionary and to the audience, the man started, You know who I am? You all know who I am? Only a few months ago I met Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, but you know, I was a slave.

So many years ago, he said, My little sister and I went down to the waterhole to fetch water in our calabashes. She went to one hole. I went to another.

Before we could say a word, suddenly there was a war shout, and a tribe fell upon us. My sister was taken in one direction, and I was taken another. I was gagged, and I couldn't even speak.

I couldn't yell. I couldn't cry for help. He said, I was taken down through a trail, and I was beaten and told to behave myself, and not to struggle, or I would be shot or pierced through with an arrow and cast to the hyenas.

Day after day, we went on and on and on. I became thin, became hungry, I became sickly, and I was told if I didn't behave myself, I would be clubbed there and there. But he said, I began to pine for my loved ones, for my sister, and it was very evident I wasn't going to make it.

One night, he said, one night, another tribe coming in the other direction suddenly met at the same place, and my boss began to talk with the boss of that tribe. And then I discovered what was happening. He wanted to sell me.

He wanted to sell me. He took one look at me, and back again at the boss of the other tribe. He said, yes, I'll take it.

And ladies and gentlemen, he said, ladies and gentlemen, men and women, men and women, I was exchanged for a chicken, a fowl, a chicken. And I passed hands, and thanked God into friendly hands. I became well.

That's why I'm here. But I paused, he said, and the big tears began to roll down his face. And he trembled with emotion.

He said, this morning, we bowed our heads around a little camp table. We've broken bread. We've drunk wine, the symbols of the self-giving of the Son of God.

God came to earth, and He said, He said, I love those people down there so much, I'm going to shed my blood for them, that they might be saved and redeemed. And He came, and He shed His blood. And I just can't get over the fact that God gave His Son for a slave, kapakupaku, a slave.

Man said, the estimate, the value of your body is a chicken. God said, My Son, My Son. He said, I'm so moved by this concept.

I'm so moved by this concept that I've made a dedication in this communion service. I want to stay within the shelter of the mystery compound. I love the fellowship.

I love the service. I love testifying. But I know there's a tribe way up yonder north that have never heard of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it's a law in our tribe that having been released, if I don't return at once, it's sure death unless they give me mercy. But whether I die or live, I'm going back to my people to tell them of a God who gave His Son while man said the value of my body was a chicken. Pray for me, He said.

Pray for me. I take my few belongings tomorrow, and I'm off. I'm off.

You may never see my face again. But if God gave His Son for me, I can't give anything else back than my totality. And He went.

We never saw Him again. We never saw Him again. But a teenager sitting on a log, heard those words, saw those tears, felt that impact, and I've never forgotten it.

In fact, I never think of Kopaku Paku without thinking of John Calvin's words, words he meant so deeply that he had them inscribed in his signet ring. Here they are. Lord, I give Thee everything.

I keep back nothing for myself. Lord, I give Thee everything. I keep back nothing for myself.

The expectation of love. Your reasonable service. Before we go any further, I'm just going to ask a question.

Have you given everything? I mean everything. I mean everything. Keeping back nothing for yourself.

That's New Testament dedication. Anything less than that falls short of God's standard for your life. Never mind what you're doing.

You may be in the most amazingly active church, the most amazingly active group, the most amazingly active team of laymen. But remember, God must be satisfied with what you are before He blesses what you do. Have you given everything? Jesus, Lord and Master, love divine has conquered.

I will henceforth answer yes to all Thy will. Freed from Satan's bondage, I am Thine forever. Henceforth, all Thy perfect will in me fulfilled.

The obligation to surrender. But let me hurry because I have something very important to say. Perhaps the very heart of everything I want to say follows my first point.

I'm calling it the order of surrender. The divine order of surrender. We've looked at the obligation.

Here is the divine order in surrender. What is the order? Paul has not been caught up into useless rhetoric and eloquence. He's speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

And every one of these words has a meaning and a weight. And we want to look at it. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

We're not going to dispute that God demands everything. He gave everything when He gave His Son. I can't give anything less than the totality of my being.

But what is the order of surrender? Let me put it this way. The Bible teaches here that the order of surrender is as follows, that that life of yours must be totally yielded and, secondly, worthily yielded. Totally, worthily.

Key words. Totally, worthily. Look at the first.

Totally yielded. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present, present your bodies. Look at that word present for a moment.

In the original, it's a word which means the handing over of a gift. It has its roots in the Old Testament about the gift that was brought to God and handed through the priest to God. It's a word which means the handing over of a gift.

You never give a gift to take it back again. You bring your life. You say, here it is, Lord, I hand it over.

I can't take it back again. But now the word bodies, faculties. The word is, I believe, specifically employed here to show the totality of our whole being.

We talk about giving our spirits, our souls, and nobody can argue with you because they can't see either your spirit or your soul. But Paul says, no, I'm specifying your bodies, your bodies, your bodies, since your body contains your spirit and your soul. And there's something very significant about this.

Why is there emphasis on the body here? Why? Because the body is that through which we express God's will while we're here upon earth. While we're here upon earth. God has no eyes but your eyes, my friend.

God has no ears but your ears. God has no tongue but your tongue. God has no hands but your hands.

God has no feet but your feet within the world in which you move. The redeemed humanity on earth is a projection or an extension of the incarnation. Just as God came down into a human life in order to express himself here upon earth those thirty-three and a half years, so by the resurrection life of Jesus released in the Holy Ghost to every believer, God again lives in us through our eyes, our lips, our minds, our hands, our feet, our bodies, radiating out his glory and power and grace.

And he wants your body. He can't do it without your body. Furthermore, I want to say, when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ as believers, when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ as believers, and I'm not talking about the Thronos, the great white throne, I'm talking about the Bhima, the judgment seat of Christ for all believers, barring none.

When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ and your eschatological views do not change at all, whatever interpretation you may put on prophecy will find you one day at the judgment seat of Christ. I'll be there. You'll be there.

When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, I want to remind you from 2 Corinthians 5 that we're going to be judged for the things done in the body. Our past, our present is going to be reviewed at the judgment seat of Christ in terms of what we have done in the body. That body of yours is God's.

I'll tell you, every part of it is God's. That brain of yours, that creative spirit of yours, that soul of yours, those hands, that personality are God's. He's bought you outright through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You're not your own. You're bought with a price. You're not your own.

You're bought with a price. And until you place that body in all its totality on the altar of God's acceptance, my friend, you're not a dedicated man. You're not a dedicated woman.

Because I want to tell you something. The Bible teaches so specifically within the Old Testament in you that God never consecrates a part. He always consecrates the whole.

He never consecrates a part. He always consecrates the whole. And until I put my total life on the altar, He will not totally consecrate me.

The illustration, of course, is the priest of old times. When the oil, first the blood, was put upon him, it was his right ear, his right thumb, his right toe. When the oil was poured upon him, it was his right ear, his right thumb, his right toe.

The total man. Speaking of his total dedication, and therefore his total consecration. You can't consecrate your life.

That's bad theology. You dedicate your life. What you dedicate, God consecrates.

And God only consecrates what you dedicate. And God never consecrates a part. He only consecrates the whole.

Therefore your dedication must be total. Have you yielded everything? But as if that weren't all, Paul goes even deeper and he says, oh listen to this, listen to this. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice.

A holy sacrifice. An acceptable sacrifice. Is that merely buildup of words? Not a bit of it.

God intends that you should not only be totally yielded, but worthily yielded. You've got to bring, first of all, a living sacrifice. A living sacrifice.

What does that mean? What does that mean? A living sacrifice. What does that mean? Have you thought it through? What does a living sacrifice mean? Scholars tell us that it means at least three things. And I am persuaded on two of them, if not all of them.

First of all, obviously it means a sacrifice living in the sense that it's intellectually or intelligently alive. You're not an ox or a bullock or a sheep or a dove or a pigeon. You're a human being and you know exactly what you're doing.

And this institute has been called in order that you shall bring your mind to bear upon these great eternal truths. And the decision you make must be an intelligent one, intelligently alive. But deeper than that, it means that your sacrifice is to be spiritually alive.

Of course, that means you to be born again. To be born again. I have no right as an evangelist, nor you as a layman evangelist, to get up and tell people who are unregenerate to give themselves to God.

God never tells us in the Bible that sinners are to be received in that way, or to yield themselves in that way. A sinner can't give anything. A sinner takes forgiveness, reconciliation, life.

When he's born again and alive, then he gives. A sinner can only sing, just as I am without one plea. But once I have come and I'm saved, I can give to God.

Spiritually alive. Spiritually alive. But you know, it's deeper than that.

It's deeper than that. I am persuaded that Paul's use of the word, living here, is rooted in chapter 6, where Paul deals with this whole matter of our death with him, by baptism into death, burial and resurrection. That identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection.

Where Paul says this, you remember? Reckon yourselves indeed dead unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And he's talking to Christians. He's talking to Christians.

And do you know what he's doing? He's blasting the doctrine of antinomianism. You say, what is antinomianism? Lawlessness, cheap grace, relativity. The kind of thing that's murdering the Christian witness in our churches today.

The new morality. And Paul says, how can you who are dead to sin live any longer therein? Absolutes are absolutes. If you've accepted Christ as your Savior and you've been identified with him in death upon the cross, and you've seen Jesus not only dying for you, but you've seen yourself dead with Christ, then your whole life is terminated.

You're finished with it. And you can't have anything more to do with it. Your life now is entirely alive to God.

That's the life I want you to yield to me. We quote very glibly and lightly sometimes, I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. But is it true? Is it true? Have you really been crucified with Christ? Judicially, of course, yes, two thousand years ago.

But personally, have you been crucified? Are you asking the Holy Spirit daily to apply the killing power, the mortifying power, the crucifying power of the cross to your self-life according to Romans 8, 13, in order that the Christ life, the life, may break through that mortal body of yours, and you can yield that kind of life to God and say, that's the kind of life, oh God, I bring you to use day by day in total surrender? You say, what do you mean Romans 8, 13? Listen, if you live after the flesh, you shall die. If you live after the flesh, you shall die. I don't care how popular it is, I don't care how attractive, I don't care what good jokes it can tell, I don't care what theology can preach.

If you live after the flesh, you shall die. But if ye through the Spirit, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, I can't kill my self-life, I can't, you can't. But if you submit it to the indwelling Spirit to apply the killing power of the cross, the sentence of the cross to that emerging self-life within you, if you're trusting the Holy Spirit to do that, the Bible says, if ye through the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

A living sacrifice, a living sacrifice. But to me, the deepest meaning of this word living is what I'm going to say now, and I want especially my brethren in industry, in education, in whatever sphere you serve, to follow me closely here. I believe that word living means not only intelligently or intellectually alive, spiritually alive, but continually alive.

Paul has the vision here in his mind's eye of the burnt offering. When the offering was laid upon the altar, that brazen altar, having been slayed on the north side of the altar, having been flayed, having been cut up in its respective pieces, the whole sacrifice was laid deliberately upon the altar. Now, the whole sacrifice is on the altar.

Very well. Can't the priest leave it now? Isn't his job complete? No. That's where we make our mistake.

No. No. The priest has to stay there and watch it as a continual sacrifice, as it was often called, or a burning sacrifice, until it was wholly consumed.

Wholly consumed. Wholly consumed. And there were times when these big sacrifices tended to slip from off the altar.

And you know that God even made provision for that, and told Moses to tell Aaron that certain instruments had to be employed at that altar. They were called flesh hooks. Flesh hooks.

And these flesh hooks were handy. When that sacrifice tended to slip any place, those flesh hooks were applied, and that sacrifice was brought back to the center of the altar, center of the altar, center of the flame, until it was wholly consumed. Now, what does that mean to you and me? Let me tell you

something.

Institute meetings like this, convention meetings like this, a movement of the Spirit in some church takes place. We all want to stand and say, ah, Lord, I want to dedicate my life afresh to Thee. In a sense, there's no harm in that, provided you know what you're doing.

But I'm convinced more and more in my own ministry, in my own church and conventions, that what I'm about to say now is the great emphasis of the hour. And it's simply this. Providing I know what I'm doing, it's intelligent.

Providing I'm bringing to God that spiritual sacrifice which He wants, I'm to lay that life of mine upon the altar. And having laid it upon the altar, I'm to use the flesh hooks to show the measure and manner of my dedication. And you know I've named those flesh hooks.

Do you know what they are? Determination and discipline. Determination and discipline. Why determination? My dear old Father, who was a of Africa, inculcated a sentence in my mind that I've never forgotten.

I want you to remember it. He used to say this. Stephen, my boy, determination, not desire, controls our destiny.

Determination, not desire, controls our destiny. There are thousands of Christians, and hundreds of them here tonight, who desire to be totally dedicated to God. But are you determined? You'll never stay in the place of total dedication until the flesh hook of determination is put into that life of yours, to be right where God wants you, the center of the flame.

What is the other flesh hook? I call it discipline. You say, what's discipline? I mean discipline. It's the word we don't like.

But nobody can be a disciple without being disciplined. And I want to be very practical for a moment. I mean discipline in every area of your life.

Are you disciplined in your quiet time? Do you rise every day to meet your God? Remember, He's a God who seeks worshipers. And if my Savior, who was absolutely perfect and sinless in His manhood, needed to get up every day, every day, as Isaiah tells us, and Mark does in chapter 1 and verse 32, as the verb indicates there, every day to meet His God. If Jesus needed to do that every day, can I do anything less? I wonder how many businessmen here get up, and they just say a brief little prayer at the bed and to breakfast and away to work.

And you're a creature of eternity, remember, a creature of eternity. And this goes on week after week, month after month, year after year, and you expect to be used by God. Efficiency, but no effectiveness.

Do you know the average time a Christian spends in prayer in America today? It's been worked out statistically. Do you know how? Five minutes. Five minutes.

A leading psychiatrist, a Christian man, gave those statistics at our church last week. Five minutes. Five minutes.

You say, well, how can I have my quiet time? Everything seems to break in upon it. The children, the telephone, the business needs. I'll tell you one word, discipline.

Discipline. Discipline. And a man who's not disciplined is not dedicated.

For part of my dedication is determination and discipline, the flesh hooks that keep me at the place of yieldedness to God. God won't make me yield against my will. If my dedication is real, I'm going to back it up by determination and discipline.

A living sacrifice. A living sacrifice is intelligently living, spiritually living, continually living. Somebody says to me, when? Tell me when my task is over in applying those flesh hooks.

I'll tell you, when Jesus comes or Jesus calls, and not before. A girl came to me some while ago and said, Stephen, all for this business of dedication just doesn't work. I stood up in convention and conference and retreat time and time again, and somehow it never works.

I said, my dear friend, what kind of dedication are you talking about? New Testament dedication? She said, yes. I said, no, you're not. Oh, no, you're not.

She said, but I am. I said, Joan, I'm very sorry, but you're not. She said, will you explain what you mean? I said, happily.

I said, if I understand Romans 12, 1 and 2, when I lay my life upon that altar, it's not for a week's trial or a month's trial or a year's trial to see whether or not this thing works out. When I lay my life upon that altar with intelligence, knowing what God has done for me, then that life is on there forever. What are you doing off the altar? Dedication.

Dedication. Dedication. I want to share something that broke in upon my soul.

It's absolutely fresh. You're probably the only people who've heard it, because it meant so much to me. I want to share it with you.

Do you know I discovered that in the original language, the Greek, our Savior's word of triumph on the cross is literally, to all intensive purposes, the one word, dedication. And the Savior didn't consider his dedication to God complete until he was prepared to release his spirit at the very last moment. All along through his life, he was dedicated, dedicated, but he wasn't going to give up.

And even in the trials and burnings and searchings and pain and anguish and unspeakable, unspeakable hell upon the cross, he wouldn't give up. And at the last, just about the moment when he dismisses his spirit, he cries, dedicated. He dismissed his spirit and went into the presence of his father.

That's dedication. And as he was in the world, so we must be. I told you I was going to be long.

I'm awfully sorry, but I've got a few more things on to say. It says a living sacrifice. It says a holy sacrifice.

Did you see the word? You spell it. H-O-Y-L-Y. Do you know what holy means? It means holy, sanctified, pure.

I can't bring to God that which costs me nothing. God's lamentation in Malachi's day was simply this. You brought to my altar stale bread.

You brought to my altar lame and maimed animals. Is this not evil, saith the Lord of hosts? When I bring this life of mine to God in dedication, I must be sure that I've been initially cleansed by the blood. I take

that for granted with a congregation like this tonight.

But it means that I'm daily cleansed by the application of the spirit and the word to my life. And as I dedicate my life, perhaps tonight, I'm going to follow through with an attitude of dedication. What was an act must be followed by an attitude.

What was a crisis must be followed through by a process. What I do tonight, I maintain in a holy fellowship with my Savior, allowing nothing to come between to spoil that dedication. I wonder how many of you know the name of Bishop Taylor Smith.

He's of a past generation, an old English bishop who used to travel the states quite a lot. He never wrote a book, but his notations in his Bible were so precious and rich that two books have been written on what is known as Bishop Taylor Smith's Bible, a man of God. He was never in a railway compartment or a taxi cab or a restaurant without leaving half a dozen people, possibly even more, who had trusted Jesus Christ.

The life of God just broke through that man all the time, chaplain to all the forces, honored by the Queen and honored by the King as well. Bishop Taylor Smith. I heard him once speak to students, and he put it this way.

And I'm talking now about the attitude of surrender. He said, I learned that surrender wasn't only an act, but an attitude, not only a crisis, but a process. And he was a big, big man, so big, in fact, that his surplus was once laundered in South Africa, and it was returned with the label One Bell Tent.

The old bishop stood up there with his hands raised to heaven, and he said, when I get up in the morning, before I fling the clothes off my bed, I lie back on the bed, and I say, oh God, the bed is the altar, and here I am, Thy servant, the sacrifice. And I reaffirm my dedication before I start the day. An attitude of surrender.

Holy. And listen, acceptable. Do you know what that word means? Very simple.

Pleasing. Pleasing. Do you know where Paul gets it from? From the ascending altar, from the ascending offering, or the golden altar, in the tabernacle, later in the temple.

And you know, that spoke that went up to God as a pleasing, as a pleasing sacrifice. Was sometimes seen by eyes, sometimes not seen by eyes, but it had to go up just the same. Do you know what that tells me about? Tells me about your hidden life as well as your open life.

It's got to be pleasing to God. You say, did anybody ever live a life like that? Yes, Jesus did. Jesus did.

We don't know anything about the childhood days of the Lord Jesus, save one little flower that's thrown over the wall of His childhood days. But when He stood on the banks of Jordan to present Himself to His Father for His life's work, you remember how heaven opened, and God looked back upon His hidden life that you don't know anything about, I don't know anything about. But God looked back upon His hidden life, those hidden years, and He said, this is My beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased.

Then the Savior pursued His ministry until He reached the very zenith of His conquering ministry, and as He stood upon Mount, yes, Mount Transfiguration, the changing mount, the changing, transforming mount of glory for Him. You remember how heaven broke through again concerning His public ministry, and what did God say? My beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased. Hidden life pleased Him.

Open life pleased Him. An acceptable sacrifice, a pleasing sacrifice. You see, you see, we're in an institute.

We're all dressed very nicely. We're in the hush of God's presence. We're also aware of one another here, and we're on our best behavior.

But that won't do. You've got to be pleasing just as much in the hidden life. When our soloist friend said, I've been in Bobby Richardson's hometown, and that's the test of a man's life.

I like that. I like that. Most of us can be saints in church and demons at home.

A pleasing sacrifice. How are you when your door is closed, in your library, in your study, in your office? A pleasing sacrifice. A pleasing sacrifice.

Seen or unseen, still going up. A pleasing sacrifice. You see, I told you I had a burden, and God's speaking to me, deeply to me, far more to me because I've been living with this.

When I talk about dedication, I talk not only about an obligation, I talk about a divine order. Not only a divine obligation, but a divine order. And that order is that it must be totally yielded, worthily yielded, totally as a gift, as a body.

Worthily yielded as a living, holy, acceptable sacrifice. One closing thought and I'm done. What then is the object of surrender? What is the divine object of surrender? Why does God go to all these pains to teach me how to surrender? I've looked at the obligation, the order, now the object.

What is the object of surrender? The answer is just found in that verse too, and be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Now here's the sting in the tail. Here is where this absolutely shatters me and brings me humbly to the cross to know the meaning of dedication.

What is the object of surrender? Just two simple truths, and we won't be long. Here is the first one. First of all, it is the transformation of my character.

The transformation of my character. I suppose one of the most highly theological passages in all the Bible, with the exception perhaps of Philippians chapter 2, is Romans chapter 8, where Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, goes into the eternity and says, why did God foreknow us? It is foreknowledge. How did God break into time? And in foreknowledge elect us, call us, justify us, and one day glorify us.

Why? Why? Answer, that we might be conformed to the image of God's Son, that we might be conformed to the image of God's Son. And what's far more important than winning souls, far more important than building churches, far more important than evangelizing the heathen, all that's terribly important and a by-product, but there's something far more important than that, and it's this, that first of all, I might be conformed to the image of God's Son, and that happens every day. God is peopling heaven with men and women like His Son, and He's interested in justifying you, and calling you, and glorifying you, that you might be conformed to the image of His Son.

Very well then, if that's the case, the transformation of my character, what is involved? One negative, two positive. Negatively, I'm not to be conformed to this world. Do you know what that means? Read J. B. Phillips' translation.

J. B. Phillips' translation is very dramatic here. He says, don't be squeezed into the world's mold. Now, here is something which is very touchy, but absolutely clear from the Word of God.

There is not one solitary scripture from Genesis to Revelation to teach me that my job in life is to be like the world. If I am born of God, if I'm dedicated to God, if I'm being renewed daily from the center to the circumference by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit, it's in order that I might be a distinct, unique individual in a contemporary age, a marked man, so that whether I'm in politics, or whether I'm in business, or whether I'm in education, or wherever I am, I'm a marked man. People may sneer and scoff, but deep down in their heart they respect me because I'm a marked man.

I'm not conformed to the world. I don't take my standards from the world. I don't take my policies from the world.

I take my standard and my policies from the absolutes of the eternal God, with whom I have to do, and for that reason I'm a marked man. Now, do you know the word that Paul uses here? The word conformed is a word that's from the naturalists, from the biologists. It means protective coloration.

When I was a boy we had every kind of pet, I suppose, that we could ever find in the jungles of Africa. I remember once feeding a little leopard. We had turtles, we had rabbits, we had deers, but amongst others we had the little reptile, because it is a reptile, known as the chameleon or chameleon.

Have you ever seen that little creature? You can take that little creature and you can put it on your white chapeau and it'll turn a sandy white. You can take that chameleon and put it over amongst these lovely flowers here in this auditorium and you'll see it turn to green. You put it amongst the flowers and you'll see a sort of variegated color matching the flowers.

What is it? Protective coloration. It means that you can't find it. It conditions itself to its surroundings so that it's no longer distinctive, it's hidden.

Do you know there are too many Christian chameleons? Are you one of them? And I'm going to say, and I'm going to say it publicly here, that one of the biggest, one of the biggest humbugs to evangelism, one of the greatest barriers to blessing, one of the great obstacles to revival. Oh God, send revival and send it to this very institute these days. One of the greatest hindrances to revival in our country today are Christian chameleons.

They're one thing here, another thing there. And they take to themselves the protective coloration, they don't stand distinctively in the office, they don't stand for integrity, they don't stand for this and they don't stand for that. Why? They won't be popular, the business won't sell, they won't get along.

The Bible stands forth and says, be not conformed to this world, be not conformed to this world, don't be squeezed into the world's mold. Now that doesn't mean that we got to be sticky, it doesn't mean straight-laced, it doesn't mean antiquated, it doesn't mean any of those nebulous and ignorant concepts at all. It just means that I transcend the world.

Anything that's in the world I can use, why the scripture says, use the world but not abuse it. God has given us richly all things to enjoy. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

I have more right to the world than any Russian or Cuban or American or British or anybody else. Why? Because I'm part of the family that are to inherit the earth. But this verse means that I'm to transcend, I'm

to live, I'm to give the lead.

I don't care what it is, in conscience or standards or anything else, the Christian should be in the lead. He's a marked man. That's what rocked the early church, that's what rocked the early world of the first century.

They took knowledge of them, that they'd been with Jesus. They were marked men, marked men. Secondly, of course, conformity to Christ.

And we've touched upon that, so I merely add, and I want to say it very humbly, I want to say it very sincerely, and I want to say it is my testimony to back dear Bobby Richardson. I have a television program. For 25 years I've conducted united crusades.

I've had two churches, and now in New York City we're seeing a rising tide of blessing. And God's blessed us in many ways, but you know I've come to the place where all that means absolutely nothing. When I've done it, I'm still an unworthy servant.

There's a new longing that's come into my heart. There's a new hunger that's come into my heart, and I say it right here before my wife. If I should ever pass away, and she were asked what she thought of her husband, I think I'd cry in glory if she said, well, he was a great preacher or a great evangelist or an organizer.

I'll cry. I hope that when my children look back on me, my wife or anybody else, I hope they'll be able to say, he reminded us of Jesus. He reminded us of Jesus.

I've been reading the memoirs of Robert Murray McChane, the man who broke into the Scottish life like no other man did. Only 30 years of age, and he died, but he's left an impact upon that land that still persists after he's gone. Do you know what his ambition was? He said, the greatest ambition of my life is to be a holy man, to be a holy man, just to be like Jesus, just to be like Jesus.

Be not conformed to this world, but be transfigured, transfigured. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, changed, same Greek word, changed into the same image of Christ, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. To just be like Jesus, just to be like Jesus, just to be like Jesus.

Watch him through the Gospels. The little children loved him. They ran into his arms.

The lepers came to him. The intellectuals came to him, under cover of darkness, or in broad daylight. Prostitutes came to him.

Men of strength came to him. Soldiers came to him. They sought him.

Why? Just because he was Jesus. I want to be like Jesus, just like Jesus. That's the price to pay, dedication.

Not only the transformation of our character, however, but in conclusion, the regulation of our conduct, the regulation of our conduct. The object of surrender is the transformation of our character. Secondly, the regulation of our conduct, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

And I want to tell you, I said the last thing when I say this, whether in heaven or on earth, there is no other place I want to be than the center of God's will. If I were in heaven or on earth and anywhere else than the

center of God's will, I am in hell for all intents and purposes. There is only one consuming passion that the Savior had throughout his life, was to reveal the Father in a God like this, but with that and alongside of that, to do the Father's will.

And the battle in Gethsemane was, Father, not my will, but thine be done. If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as I will.

My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work. And to do the will of God, to do the will of God, is the greatest thing in all the world. In heaven or on earth, the will of God, the will of God.

And how can I do the will of God? Only when I'm in the place of total surrender, in answer to the divine obligation, in answer to the divine order, in answer to the divine objective, the center of God's will, just like Jesus in the center of God's will. And because we're so ignorant and because we're so timid and because we're so reluctant, the Spirit of God says the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. The good will of God.

Do you know what that word means? Just beneficent. Beneficent. I looked into the brown eyes of a delightful, charming nurse, sitting right there in the front pew of our church, who broke under the power of the message some months ago.

She's radiant for Christ now. When I gave the invitation, she was one of the first to come forward. She said, I want to yield everything to God.

I want Him to have everything. I want Him to have everything, but I've got one great problem. I said, what is it? What is it? Tell me what is it? She looked up into my face, those big brown eyes filled with tears, and she said something that made me love her in Christ, because I knew what she meant.

Before I corrected it, I let her say all she had to say. She said, I want to yield everything to God, but tell me, Pastor, will He take mean advantage of me? I knew what she meant. She was afraid of the will of God.

She was afraid of the will of God. And I took her back to this verse. The good will.

The good will. Can you think of anything wonderful? Can you think of anything noble? Can you think of anything beautiful? Can you think of anything sweet? Can you think of anything satisfying? That's the good will of God. That's the good will of God.

It's good. It's pleasing. It's not irksome.

Not to a man who's dedicated, but supremely it's perfect. It's flawless. It's flawless.

Absolutely flawless. And I can never be the mature man of God He intends me to be. You can't be the mature woman.

You can't be the mature businessman in Christ without knowing the perfect will of God. For this is maturity. This is perfection.

Wilt thou be perfect, said the Lord Jesus to a young man? Wilt thou be perfect? Go sell all that thou hast. Yield everything to God, and you'll come into perfection. And I'm not talking about perfection of flawlessness down here.

God forbid. There is a perfection of condition and a perfection of consummation. The perfection of condition down here.

The perfection of consummation up there when we see Him face to face, they're like Him. But at every stage of growth, we can know perfection of condition here. Born again, just say, perfection of condition.

On a little longer, perfection of condition. On a little longer, perfection of condition. Until I reach, as it were, the spiritual hoary years, perfection of condition at every stage of growth.

That's God's purpose for your life and mine. I started this talk tonight by saying, what God needs today in our churches, God have mercy on carnal, unyielded, spirit-grieving, spirit-quenching pastors and ministers. And I stand condemned with many of them.

But what God needs not only in the pulpit, but in the pew, are men and women whose lives are so totally and completely dedicated that they fulfill the divine obligation, the divine order, the divine objective of this surrender, this surrender. And I want to ask as we close tonight, you're saved, but are you surrendered? For the only life that will count in our contemporary age, the only life that's going to break through all the discussions, all the dialogues, all the smoke and all the fire of battle and mudslinging, is the life that's like Jesus. The life that's like Jesus.

Do you want to be like Jesus? Do you want to be like Jesus? I'm going to suggest that in your hotel room tonight, with your wife, or alone, you take Romans 12, 1 and 2, and ask the spirit of remembrance to bring back to you this exposition, this exegesis of this passage, and go right through it on your knees. And say, Lord, you brought me to birth in your family for this. Your great concern for me, before I ever serve you, is that I might be conformed to the image of your Son.

You're far more interested in what I am than in what I do. For if what I am doesn't satisfy you, then what I do is only a bundle of wood, hay, and stubble. And I have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ to answer for what I've done in this body.

I want to ask you, Lord, show me the depths of dedication you want, and by the power of your Holy Spirit, bring me to that place of such yieldedness that I shall know what it is to be in thy good and acceptable and perfect will. And by that same Holy Spirit, strengthen my determination and my discipline to use those flesh hooks, if ever I slip, that I may keep right there at the center of that flame until the day you come to take me home, or the day you call me through the article of death. And I want to tell you, Lord, the last word I'm going to say before I answer the shout of thy return, before I answer the whisper of thy call through death, the one word I'm going to shout in triumph, is finished, dedicated.

Let us pray.

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