

Consecration

by Thomas Cook

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of total surrender to God as a pathway to spiritual fulfillment and purity of heart.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5, Matthew 16:24, Romans 12:1, Galatians 2:20, James 4:7

Topics: "Surrender To God", "Spiritual Consecration"

Description

Thomas Cook preaches on the importance of full surrender and consecration to God, emphasizing that perfect trust cannot exist without complete surrender, and that faith is the condition of blessing. He highlights the need for an entire willingness to be, do, and suffer according to God's will, drawing parallels between repentance and consecration. Cook stresses that purity of heart requires abandoning sinful practices and fully accepting God's will, with the ultimate goal of aligning our will with God's will while maintaining our individuality. He explains that the surrender of our will to God does not make it inactive but rather unites it with God's will, leading to a transformation where Christ reigns supreme in our lives.

Transcript

Some writers of advanced Christian experience magnify the will and emphasize the importance of absolute submission, while others urge faith as the condition of blessing. Both are right. Perfect trust cannot exist without complete surrender. Nor can we surrender our will to One whom we cannot trust. Lady Maxwell could pray, "Put a thorn in every enjoyment, a worm in every gourd, that would prevent, or in any measure retard my progress in Divine life." And when we can say, from our inmost heart, I am willing to receive what Thou givest, and to want what Thou withholdest, and to relinquish what Thou takest, and to suffer what Thou inflictest, and to be what Thou requirest, and to do what Thou commandest. Have Thine own way with me and mine in all particulars, we are not far from the Canaan of God's perfect love.

This full surrender is consecrated. It means an entire willingness on our part to be, to do, and to suffer, all that God wills. We use the word consecration not because it is the best word, but because it is the word in most common use and the word most likely to be understood. What repentance is to justification, consecration is to entire sanctification. Just as repentance towards God must precede faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in the case of those who seek Divine forgiveness, so unconditional surrender is the indispensable condition of trusting Christ as a Saviour from indwelling sin. Some think they must struggle and make great effort, but faith does not come as the result of effort. It rises up spontaneously in the soul when the hindrances are removed. Unbelief has always a moral cause -- unwillingness to do the will of

God in some point. The difficulty is not with our faculties, nor with evidences, but with our moral state, our disposition to follow unhesitatingly where the truth leads. Faith becomes as natural as breathing when we dethrone our idols. Nearly all the difficulty in reference to the faith which leads the Christian into full salvation is because of a reluctance to sell all to obtain this pearl of great price.

Purity of heart can never be given or retained apart from a total, complete, and absolute abandonment of all sinful and doubtful practices and the acceptance and approval of the will of God. We must make ourselves over to God, and all that we have, to be used only for His glory, and in accordance with His will. As faithful stewards, we must be content to live only to carry out the wishes of Him to whom we belong. Under the old feudal system of personal homage, the vassal declared his submission and devotedness to his lord with uncovered head, ungirt belt, sword and spurs removed. Kneeling he placed his hand between those of his lord and promised to become his man henceforth, to serve him with life and limb and worldly honor, faithfully, loyally. He sealed it all with a kiss. Something of the solemnity, completeness and personal transfer of this old-time custom is an act of the soul's submission and transfer to Christ. It is a real inward and outward transfer of self to God. It implies a surrender of our will at every point -- the unconditional acceptance of His will as the rule of our life for ever.

Not that our will is to become in any sense inoperative or dead: Union of the human will with the Divine is a very different thing from the extinction of the human will. A will, a proper and effective will, is essential to humanity. Man without a will ceases to be man. The perfection of man's nature does not consist in the extinction of his will, but in its union with God's will. Such are the wise words of Professor Upham, to which we heartily subscribe. Some persons talk of their advanced experience by saying they have no will, but no degree of grace supersedes the use of our will faculty. God has made the will the hinge on which our destiny turns, and on its freedom rests our responsibility. The true doctrine is that our will must be subordinate to the will of God. Remaining in all its energy, our will must coincide and harmonize with the supreme will of God. Thy will be done in everything, must be our attitude if we would enter into rest. Not that we are asked to disregard entirely our own welfare. Self-love is implanted in our nature, and, like the will, is essential to human individuality. If self-love were destroyed, there would be nothing to which God or man could appeal. Neither threatening nor promise would influence such a soul. Bishop Butler makes an important distinction between self-love and selfishness. Selfishness is self-love without regard for the will of God or the well-being of others. Self is exalted into the supreme law of action. It is this self that must be crucified before there can be a complete resurrection unto life. Christ, and not self, must occupy the center of our being. St. Paul could never have said, I am crucified with Christ, it is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me (Ellicott), had self been still alive disputing with Christ the throne of the soul. Self had been nailed to the cross, and Christ had taken the supreme place in the soul. Octavius, who had been one of the three rulers of the Roman Empire, thought it best in the interests of peace that the world should have but one ruler, so styling himself Augustus, he became that ruler by the defeat of Mark Antony. It was found that to have more than one ruler only provoked strife, and it is certainly for our soul's peace that there should henceforth be but one sovereign. We must choose between Jesus and the Barabbas of self. At the Keswick Convention, one who had been a Christian many years, described the nature of the blessing he had received in the following words:-- I had heard of Christ being King. Well, He had reigned in me, but it was only as a constitutional Sovereign. I was Prime Minister, and I did a good deal of the work myself. Then I found that He must be absolute Monarch. And so now He is. Happy indeed are those who can shout over the accomplished fact in their experience,

None of self and all of Thee.

To those who enter upon the work of consecration in real earnest God will make demand after demand until the self-life is exhausted. Often there is some last rallying point where self is entrenched as in a stronghold, and when that point is surrendered the victory is complete. Abraham might have been willing to give up every other thing he possessed, but if he had not been willing to give up Isaac, all else would have been useless. It is our Isaac God wants. Many Christians have something they are holding on to which the Holy Spirit tells them they must let go. They have got their Isaac just as the young ruler had his possessions. God has made clear the subject of surrender, but they are unwilling to receive the light and to follow it. Some call the struggle which ensues spiritual conflict, but it is really spiritual rebellion. It may be a trifling thing that we exempt from the dominion of Christ, but it is not a small matter if we hold on to it in antagonism to God's will. It is the battle-ground between self and the Saviour and the test whether or not Christ shall reign. How we have heard persons argue, "But this is such a trivial matter, God cannot require this," but all the time that was the point of controversy. It may be some adornment that has to be discarded, or some self-indigent habit. Oftener it is some duty that has to be performed, some association to be broken from or some doubtful thing that has to be given up. "Reign, Lord Jesus, over all but this," is the real language of the unyielding heart, but before blessing comes there must be total, complete and unconditional surrender. Miss Havergal writes: "It was on Advent Sunday, 1873, that I first saw the blessedness of true consecration. I saw it as a flash of electric light, and what you see you can never unsee. There must be full surrender before there can be full blessedness. God admits you to the one by the other." "Keep this short and complete saying," says Thomas a' Kempis, "Forsake all, and thou shalt find all," which is in exact accord with the Master's teaching, "He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

When the will gladly makes this unconditional surrender it will not be long before the Christ-life will take the place of the old-self-life, and the believer will be able to reckon himself "Dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ Jesus our Lord." An interval may elapse between full surrender and complete blessedness. The fullness as well as the intermediateness depends upon the faith of the soul in the Divine promise, but when the self-life dies the chief hindrance to faith is removed. Possibly the temptation will come that perhaps there is something not given up of which we are not conscious. You do not know all your heart, hence you cannot know that you have fully surrendered. But when the will is yielded, it includes all we know and all we do not know. If nothing less than living up to full life will suffice, nothing more is required. When we are not conscious of withholding anything from God, and are perfectly willing to receive the light and follow it, we may count the matter of consecration as settled.

A story is told of a Christian who once said, "I often hear ministers say we must consecrate all to God unreservedly and unconditionally, if we would obtain the experience of full salvation. Now I confess I do not understand this. Did I not consecrate all to God when I first embraced religion? and that is all I can do." "Let us see," replied the minister to whom he spoke, "whether you have done all you can. Have you any pride?" "Yes." "Has not that pride its object?" "Certainly," he said, after a short pause. "Have you any selfishness?" "Yes." "Has not that selfishness its object?" "Well, I suppose so." "You know in what you desire to please self rather than God?" After a few moment's hesitation, he answered, "I think I do." "Have you any undue love of the world?" "I have." "Has it its object?" "You need say no more. I see the point clearly. Pray for me;" and he went home to search his heart, and surrender in a consecration much more intelligent and discriminating than was possible when he first sought the Lord.

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