

Consecration

by W.H. Griffith Thomas

Consecration is the act of accepting God's separation of us for Himself and the consequent purification of soul necessary for His use of us, which leads to a life of holiness and dedication to Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 143:10, John 15:4, Romans 6:11-14, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Colossians 1:18, 1 Peter 4:11, 1 John 2:28

Topics: "Sanctification", "Justification"

Description

W.H. Griffith Thomas delves into the concepts of Justification and Sanctification, emphasizing the Divine provisions of new positions and conditions in Christ, as well as the gradual realization of these blessings in personal experience. He highlights the importance of accepting our Divine position and purpose, leading to a process of consecration and purification for God's service. The sermon explores the Divine Requirement of acknowledging Christ as Lord and Master, drawing parallels from the Old Testament and emphasizing the necessity of realizing and maintaining our true relationship with God. It also discusses the Human Response to God's call, focusing on receiving, realizing, reckoning, surrendering, and abiding in Christ for a life of holiness and dedication.

Transcript

We have already seen something of the meaning of Justification and Sanctification. Justification is the Divine provision of a new position for the soul in Christ, involving a new relationship. Sanctification is the Divine provision of a new condition for the soul through Christ, involving a new fellowship. The connection between the two is found in Regeneration, understood as the Divine gift of new life in Christ which expresses itself in the new birth of the Spirit.

Now we have observed that both Justification and Sanctification are complete in Christ when viewed from the Divine standpoint, for Christ as the Wisdom of God is made to us Righteousness (or Justification) for the past, Sanctification for the present, and Redemption for the future (1 Cor. 1:30). But the realization of their results in personal experience and spiritual blessing is often gradual. Justification is complete and eternal and admits of no degrees; we are not more or less justified but "justified from all things" at once and forever. This is so, quite apart from our experience of it. Sanctification, too, in the sense of God having separated us for Himself is equally complete in His intention and purpose, but the realization of it in our lives is gradual and progressive. The act by which we accept this Divine position, purpose, and provision develops into an attitude, a process, a progress. We obtain in order to maintain, retain, and attain. At this point is seen the New Testament distinction between Consecration as God's separation of us for Himself,

and as involving the consequent purification of soul necessary for His use of us. The latter is included in the former and arises out of it. Because God marks us as His own, He prepares us for His service by conforming us to the image of His Son. It is to this truth of the gradual and progressive maintenance, retention, and attainment that we must now address ourselves.

When the matter of Justification is settled, and Sanctification is realized as the will of God for the believer (1 Thess. 4:3), the question at once arises, How can this will of God be done; how can the life of Sanctification be lived? The one answer, and that both fundamental and inclusive, is, By the realization of our true and abiding relation to God and our position before Him, as not only redeemed from sin, but also redeemed for God's possession and service. In the realization, acceptance and maintenance of this position will be found one of the secrets of power and blessing in the spiritual life. It must be considered from the Divine and human standpoints.

I. The Divine Requirement We can see this very clearly in Romans 14:9. Let us face it carefully and definitely. "To this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord." This means "that He might be Lord" of our lives, Master of our entire existence. The "absolute monarchy" of Jesus Christ is the one condition of genuine Christian living. We have the same truth in Colossians 1:18. "He is the head ... that in all things He might have the preeminence." Consider also 1 Peter 4:11, "That God in all things may be glorified."

And note that St. Paul's most frequent and fullest title for our Saviour is, "the Lord Jesus Christ," or "Jesus Christ our Lord". Let us therefore settle it once for all and then realize it continuously, "We are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8). The Old Testament affords unmistakable illustrations of this great truth. We remember that Israel was a redeemed people, delivered out of Egypt; but delivered from Egypt in order to belong to God forever. They were brought out and brought in, saved to serve.

We notice in Leviticus, chapter 1, that the first offering named is the Burnt Offering; and as this offering means not Propitiation but Consecration, it is sometimes wondered why we have it first of all, and not, instead, the Sin Offering. But we must remember that all the five offerings were for the people of God, for believers and not for the unconverted. The people of Israel were already God's people on the basis of the Passover Sacrifice of Redemption; and when this is realized, the place and meaning of the Burnt Offering become clear.

It is the logical, immediate, and necessary outcome of a redeemed position; and as the offering was entirely consumed by fire, so was the life of the offerer to be wholly the Lord's. We have the New Testament counterpart of all this in exact and beautiful sequence in the Epistle to the Romans. In chapter 3 we see the great Propitiation whereby we are brought nigh to God, forgiven, justified. In chapter 6 we have our identification with Christ in His Death and Life. Then in chapter 12 comes the Burnt Offering, the "Living Sacrifice" which is our "logical" service (see Greek).

It is the "logical" outcome of those "mercies of God" by which we are redeemed (verses 1 and 2). Another notable illustration of this truth is found in the story of Joshua (chap. 5:13-15). Israel had been redeemed; and after the long wanderings and backsliding of the wilderness life was again in covenant with God on redemption ground (chap. 5:2-11). The ordinances of the Covenant were once more fulfilled and the old position resumed. What was now needed? They required a new revelation, a new and distinct lesson, a fresh and definite step.

But what was this? Not the revelation of God as Redeemer; they had that in Egypt. Not the revelation of God as Teacher; they had that at Sinai. What was really necessary was the revelation of God as LORD and MASTER. And this is exactly what was given. "As CAPTAIN of the Lord's host am I NOW come." He was there not merely to assist Israel against the Canaanites, not simply to second Joshua's efforts, but to take charge, to assume full command, to be Captain, Master, Lord. The practical power of this truth is evident.

It is the secret of peace in Christian experience, and of ever-increasing peace in proportion as the Lordship of Christ is realized. In Isaiah 9:7 it is first government, then peace. If the government be upon His shoulder, peace will be the immediate and constant result. It is also the source of power. "Our wills are ours to make them Thine," and in the "absolute monarchy" of Jesus Christ is power for character and conduct. Just as the riots in Trafalgar Square, London, years ago were quelled by the assertion of the rights of the Crown to that area, so the assertion and acceptance of the "Crown rights" of Christ will give peace and power to the Christian life.

Holiness is "wholeness" and is intended to apply to each faculty of our being, body, mind, feeling, imagination, conscience, will, everything. "That all my powers with all their might In Thy sole glory may unite." Into every part of our life, inward and outward, this Lordship of Christ is intended to enter; and when it does, it is the guarantee of blessing. This, then, is the Divine Requirement, absolute, imperative, universal.

II. The Human Response All God's revelation is conditioned upon human acceptance for full realization and enjoyment. This is so at every stage. Christ as Saviour is only realized by the acceptance of faith, and in the aspect now before us it is necessary for us to respond to the claim of God upon our lives. The first part of the response may be stated in the word "Receive". It is one of the great words of the New Testament. "To as many as received Him" (John 1:12). "They that receive abundance of grace" (Rom. 5:17).

All through the New Testament much is made of our receiving, welcoming into our lives God's full provision in Christ. "As ye received Christ Jesus the Lord" (Col. 2:6). It means the acceptance, appropriation, and application of Christ by faith for all our need. The second part of the response may be expressed by the word "Realize". "Know ye not" is one of the great keywords of Holiness (Rom. 6:3, 6, 16; 7:1; 1 Cor. 3:16, 5:6, 6:2-3, 9, 15-16, 19; 9:24). This knowledge is intended to cover the fact, nature and effect of Sin; the fact, character and power of Salvation, the fact, meaning and force of our union with Christ in His Death and Resurrection, and the fact, force and blessedness of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

Holiness very largely depends on a full knowledge and a full assurance of our position and provision in Christ. Our position is that we were slaves of Satan and sin, but we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. These are facts undeniable and unalterable. But they carry with them the inevitable consequence that we belong to Him who has paid the price; we are His property, His possession. He is first our Saviour and then our Lord, our Master, our Disposer. And this position and possession involve and ensure perfect provision and our knowledge ("Know ye not") includes this: "That we may know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor. 2:12).

We must realize all this, and accept it in its definiteness, certainty and blessedness. Then we shall have taken the second step towards Holiness. From this reception and realization we proceed to the next step which can best be stated in the Apostolic word "Reckon" (Rom. 6:11). This is another of the practical

words of holiness. It is a "metaphor taken from accounts." It means that we are to regard as true all that God says about Christ and about our position in Christ. We are to account as belonging to us all that Christ has done by His Death and Resurrection, to reckon, literally, this as our own.

When He died, we died; when He was buried, we were buried; when He rose, we rose; when He ascended, we ascended. We are absolutely one with Him and are to regard ourselves as so united to Him that all the benefits and blessings of His Redemptive work shall become ours in practical reality. So that when temptation to sin comes, we at once reckon ourselves dead to it, and it will have no power over us; when the call to purity and obedience is heard, we reckon ourselves alive in and with Christ to it, and the power at once comes.

And thus, "reckoning," that is, continually depending on and appropriating Christ, we find the "innumerable benefits" of His redemption becoming ours and the result is holiness. Then we come to the next step, which may be expressed by the word "Surrender". In Romans 6 we have it in the word "Yield". We are called first to "yield ourselves unto God" (verse 13), and as a consequence, to "yield our members as weapons of righteousness for God," and as "slaves to righteousness with a view to holiness" (verse 19).

The same attitude and word are found in Romans 12:2: "Present". It denotes one definite act of surrender, presentation, committal of ourselves to God as those who are His, and who wish to show, in daily experience, that this is so. The last stage of our response is found in the word "Abide" (John 15:4). This means the maintenance of our realized position, the act becoming an attitude, the initial presentation being continued in one long, constant attitude of full dedication.

"And now, little children, abide in Him" (1 John 2:28). This means "Stay where you are." We are to "abide in the calling" (1 Cor. 7:20). This will include abiding in Christ's word (John 8:31); abiding in His love (John 15:9), abiding in Christ Himself (John 15:4-7), abiding with God (1 Cor. 7:24). It means that we simply continue as we have begun, never drawing back, never retreating, but letting God's fact of consecration become a constant factor by means of a life of dedication.

His "Thou art mine" is to be met by "I am Thine"; "Thou art my God" is to be followed by "I am Thy servant" (Psa. 143:10 and 12). Then we shall learn the secret and enjoy the blessedness of the only true Christian life. If we thus "admit" Christ as Lord, "submit" to Him in everything, "commit" everything to Him, and "permit" Him to be everything, and to do all His will in us, then we shall indeed "transmit" His life and grace to others, and all that we are and have and do shall be to the glory and praise of God.

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