

Living For Giving - Consecration

This month, my sermon series is entitled “Living for Giving” which is an effort to help you understand that the basic lifestyle of the Christian is that of Giving. Last week we spoke of the giving of money and how that area of our life seems to be one of the keys to our heart. Our generosity and sacrifice are reflections of our act of worship, and there is no worship without sacrifice.

This week, we will be examining the area of consecration; of “setting apart” ourselves for God’s work. Giving of ourselves is crucial to all giving, and is not limited to finances, but to every area of our life, including time, attention, energy, skill, and even what we set our thoughts upon.. When Jesus said in [Mark 12:30](#) – “**YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.**”

He meant this literally and not as some nicety of phrase. This was not just a cool sounding phrase that he found fit to quote from the Law.

One young preacher began a ministry at a comfortable middle class church. As he preached the first week, he preached on the subject of our dedication, total surrender, all, everything that we have - giving it over to God for His use. As he ministered and stood at the door on the way out, the elders gave him a pat on the back and said: 'That was a great message'. The second week he ministered on the same subject. It wasn't so great that week. They had heard this kind of message before. Then on the third week, as he ministered again on the same message from the word of God, he says that fear gripped him as he could visibly see those within the assembly gripping their hands in anger because they realised that he was speaking to them.

When I read that passage of “You shall love the Lord Your God with ALL” I hope that you are made uncomfortable when you realize what that ALL means. If you are not made uncomfortable, then my words are wasted and your time here is not well spent.

1. Your ALL. What does that mean? All, Everything...not SOME, not a PIECE of. Not just a PART of something, not a SLICE, PORTION, or even a TENTH. All means ALL, no matter how you try to spell it.
 - a. The bible calls this CONSECRATION. When the priests were set aside or consecrated for their service in the temple, they were set aside EXCLUSIVELY for that purpose.
 - i. ALL in their case meant that GOD had EXCLUSIVE use of their lives for Him.
 - ii. The Nazarite...who was one in the Old Testament who was sometimes consecrated at birth to God’s service, kept special vows which were reminders of his complete and total, his exclusive dedication to God.

- b. **CONSECRATE** dedicate, set apart for special use. We are called to be consecrate vessels, not for “ordinary” use (ie. profane use) but for “special use” that is for worship.
- i. *2 Timothy 2:19-21 “Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.” Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses (purges, cleans out) himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified (set apart – agiazo), useful (able to be used) to the Master, prepared (in a state of readiness) for every good work.”*
 1. If you have a burning desire to be used by God, then the first thing you and I must do is to surrender our lives to Him so that our lives cease to be ordinary.
 2. If you don’t have a burning desire to be used by God, then you may wish to ask yourself why you don’t feel that desire. It may be your life has so wandered away from God that you no longer remember what a joy it is to have His power surge through you, to see His hand move mountains before you, and to hear His voice whisper in your ear.
 - a. Or it may be that you have never personally known this God of heaven and earth, whose birth we will celebrate in a few short weeks.
 - b. The Savior Jesus, come to earth, “God with us” – Emmanuel. He came to live and die for our sins so that we can know and experience God in a relationship that lasts forever.
 - ii. *“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” —2 Corinthians 6:17, 18*
 1. Become separated from the hold of the things that you hold!
 2. And turn to Jesus and God will become to you a Father, and you shall become His Son’s and Daughters.
- c. Remember holiness is a flower, not a root; it is not the clean life that saves, but salvation that cleans our lives.
- i. . A man is not saved by his holiness, but he becomes holy because he is already saved.
 - ii. Being justified by faith, and having peace with God, he walks no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and in the power of the blessing which he has received by grace he dedicates himself to the service of his gracious God. Consecration to God follows calling and Salvation. (Spurgeon)
 - iii. We conduct ourselves differently when we have been changed by Christ’s love, we no longer desire to pursue many of the things and ways of life we once did. They no longer make us happy. We don’t choose to avoid them because we are trying to earn God’s love, but because we already have it, we choose to let them go out of our love for God.

- d. **Consecration/Sanctification is entire separation of the life to God; consequently, it is the cleansing of the life to the condition of holiness or spiritual health.**
- e. **The sinner repents and believes for pardon -- the believer consecrates and believes for purity.**
 - i. There is a wide difference between repentance and consecration; between surrendering to God and presenting (making a present of) the body a living sacrifice to Him.
 - ii. By this we mean that the one who repents, turns away from sin and toward God and receives the salvation of his soul.
 - iii. But the one who consecrates, presents his body as a living sacrifice to God because he desires to become like his master. His life becomes a continuous act of worship.

2. **JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES TO BE CONSECRATED BY THE TRUTH** (vs. John 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

a. **Explain how God's word, the truth, will set us apart and purify us.**

b. Preconditions of a prepared heart

- i. What are the preconditions in this matter of purification and consecration, which are the precursors of perfection of fellowship with God?
 - 1. First, *there must be a deep concern for your spiritual condition and moral state.*
 - a. Do you have a deep concern for your spiritual condition and moral state?
 - b. If you do not, you have not even begun to move in the direction of perfection of fellowship with God.
 - c. This deep concern indicates that the stirrings of the Holy Spirit are within. With this concern, you will feel guilty and ashamed of your selfish actions and self-willed behaviour.
 - d. You will feel uncomfortable with your worldly lifestyle.
 - e. You will say, "Something is not right. I do not think God is really pleased with me." That is a precondition for moving toward this matter of purification and consecration.
 - 2. Second, *there must be a recognition that God is holy and righteous, and that He requires holiness and righteousness.*
 - a. This understanding reveals a godly fear, which produces much spiritual fruit; and if there is not this recognition that God is holy and righteous, if there is not this godly fear, then you have not even begun to move in the direction of perfection of fellowship with God.
 - 3. Third, *there must be a genuine desire to be more holy and righteous like God, and a genuine desire to be one with God.*
 - a. If you do not have these desires, you have not even begun to move in the direction of perfection of fellowship with God.

3. **Practical Steps to Consecration**

a. *Genuine spiritual consecration begins with communion with God.*

- b. SEPARATION – refusing to be a part of certain harmful or un-helpful things.
- c. REPENTANCE – turning away from doing certain things that are not pleasing to God.
 - i. True repentance hates the sin, and not merely the penalty; and it hates the sin most of all because it has discovered and felt God's love. - W.M. Taylor
 - 1. First, repentance entails *self-examination*--you need to take a long, hard look at yourself; you need to take stock of yourself and determine where you stand before God.
 - a. Some of us are afraid and reluctant to look at ourselves because we may not like what we see. Many Christians are content to live in a state of spiritual denial.
 - b. But we need to examine ourselves; and we need to examine ourselves in the light of God's Word, and not according to society's standards or the standards of our peers.
 - i. *"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth"*
 - c. We need to learn to resensitize our consciences and to keep them tender.
 - i. ***Ezekiel 36:26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."***
 - ii. ***Our hearts of stone must be changed to hearts of flesh.***
 - d. You will not achieve this unless you regularly meditate on God's Word (particularly the New Testament) and be confronted with, and informed by, the Christian ethic.
 - i. *"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth"*
 - e. You must meditate on that Word humbly and meekly, refusing to be conformed to the ways and standards of this world. Your goal should simply be to know God's will.
 - i. *"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth"*
 - 2. Repentance entails *confession*. We all have some wrongdoing, failure, or sin to confess in our lives. Daniel Webster (1782-1852) said, "There is no refuge from confession but suicide; and suicide is confession."
 - 3. Repentance entails a *determination* to turn away from your sin, and to turn toward God in new obedience.
 - a. Now, often we *know* what is the right thing to do. Many of us *desire* to do the right thing. This may not be where the problem lies.

- b. The problem lies in our will. Our will has not been surrendered, and thereby resists. Our mind knows the right thing, but our will cannot bring our lives into the correct actions.
 - i. Two reasons for this:
 - 1. **Bondage** – we can become slaves to our sin, even as Christians. Before we were Christians, we were slaves to our sin. We could not break it. (Romans 7).
 - a. **Rom 7:14-15**, “ For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I {would} like to {do,} but I am doing the very thing I hate. **18-19** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good {is} not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.”
 - b. Does this sound like you sometimes? If so, you may be in bondage, because you haven’t surrendered your will to God. You may not have surrendered your heart to Christ and so have not been freed from the tyranny of sin.
 - c. Jesus died on the cross to free us not only from the penalty of sin, but also to free us from the Power of sin. You can choose today to be freed from that power today.
 - 2. **Walking by the flesh** – the bible calls it “sowing to the flesh” because it reaps what is sown.
 - a. If we do things that allow the flesh to control us, we will be surrendering our lives to the control of the flesh. Again, this is bondage.
 - b. And you must decide to yield your will to Jesus to allow Him to free you. To crucify the “old” person and allow the Spirit of God to control you.
- d. **DEDICATION** – committing to actually doing certain things that are pleasing to God..
 - i. The work of purification and consecration involves *dedication*. Again, we need to choose to be committed to do what is right.
 - 1. Not only must we 'put off,' but we must self-consciously 'put on.'
 - 2. Many people are content in simply not being bad, but the Scriptures go further than that.

3. Do not simply be content in not being bad, but be concerned about actually being good.
 4. If we are to be lights in the world, we will only do so when we are taking positive, intentional actions of love and kindness toward others.
4. The GREAT WHITE THRONE AUDIT (Judgment)
- a. The day will come when we must as believers give an accounting for our lives and how we lived them. Last week I called it an audit. How did we spend our time, our talents and our treasures? Upon what priorities were our lives built?
 - i. Time – spent on us, on recreation (most time in the world!) that there is no employment of our time, no action or conversation, that is purely indifferent. All is good or bad, because all our time, as everything we have, is not our own. All these are, as our Lord speaks, *the property of another*; of God our Creator.
 - ii. Talents – what God has given us in abilities. Do we use them to build up the kingdom? Or do we only work on our own homes, our own cars, and our own things. Do we use what God has given us for the benefit of others?
 - iii. Treasures – last week we spoke on this. How did you spend the money God entrusted you with? Did you give it away to those in need? Or did you simply spend it on what your own heart desired?
 1. Keep in mind that what we own own’s us. And when we come to the great audit of our lives, some of us may resemble Enron or any number of other great corporations that cooked their books to have a little more treasure. On the Oregon trail, as the trail got rough, the travelers began to unload the objects that held them back from their destination. They would not make it over the mountain carrying many of the things they once thought indispensable. Now, they found they would not finish their journey if they continued with those very objects.
 2. *Desire of ease* is another of these foolish and hurtful desires; desire of avoiding every cross, every degree of trouble, danger, difficulty; a desire of slumbering out life, and going to heaven upon a feather-bed.
 - a. *John Wesley noted* “Everyone may observe how riches first beget, and then confirm and increase, this desire, making men more and more soft and delicate; more unwilling, and indeed more unable, to "take up their cross daily;" to "endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and to "take the kingdom of heaven by violence.””
 3. Two millennium ago, when the elders at Ephesus begged Paul to sidestep the dangers at Jerusalem, the old apostle was incensed. He said in effect, “What’s the game plan here fellas? If it’s saving my own hide, I’m in the wrong business. If it’s waltzing down the easy road on the sunny side of the street, I’ve been wasting my time. Hey this missionary stuff isn’t about me, its not about my confort, my desires or my safety.”

- a. Acts 20:22, 24 “And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there...But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.”
 - b. Paul’s comfort wasn’t even considered when it came to his call and his mission. His time was not his own, His talents were not his own. His treasures were not his own. All he had was Christ’s. And he was willing to serve God even if it meant laying down his life.
 - c. When was the last time you were willing to bear up under inconvenience, sacrifice and discomfort for the gospel of Jesus Christ?
- b. The Widow’s Mite
- i. Luke 21:4. Widows mite -which reads as follows: "And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."
 - ii. The rich gave *"of their abundance,"* probably a tithe of their income for a stated period of time, feeling no doubt that they were generous and meeting every requirement of the law touching financial offerings.
 - 1. How different it was with the *"also"* giver, who "cast in all the living that she had!" Her trembling hand held but little, but that little was all given to God.
 - 2. Her possessions were few and meager, but she was not afraid to trust them entirely in the hand of the Lord. Back of the gift was a heart full of devotion, rich with love and strong in faith; her manner was simple and eloquent with holy fervor.
 - 3. The amounts that others gave or withheld was nothing to her. She was worshipping God "in Spirit and in truth" and "seeing him who is invisible." It is no wonder that Jesus "looked *up*" when that woman approached the altar.
 - 4. The widow presented her offering to God. She did not make her offering to the church, to the rabbi, to the poor, nor to be seen of the rich; she made her offering to God.
 - 5. **She did not make her offering because the church treasury was empty, nor because repairs on the temple were needed, nor because new doors to important mission fields were opening, nor because she heard an eloquent and convincing appeal for money; she made her offering to God because she loved Him with all her heart and wanted to honor Him with all her substance.**
 - 6. So it must be with you and I. We must give our time, talents and treasure to God, not because He or anyone else needs them. We give them to Him because

it is an act of our worship, not because it is required of us. We do so because we love Him and it is an expression of our love for Him. Nothing else.

The story is told that one day a beggar by the roadside asked for alms from Alexander the Great as he passed by. The man was poor and wretched and had no claim upon the ruler, no right even to lift a solicitous hand. Yet the Emperor threw him several gold coins.

A courtier was astonished at his generosity and commented, "Sir, copper coins would adequately meet a beggar's need. Why give him gold?"

Alexander responded in royal fashion, "Copper coins would suit the beggar's need, but gold coins suit Alexander's giving."

Now as we get ready to close, to make a decision on how we shall consecrate our lives to Christ, how we shall “turn around” from the course we have been heading on and move toward surrender of our hearts and our wills to Him who died for us...let me read a story of a great organist.

Mendelsson it is said, once visited the cathedral at Fridbourg, and having heard the great organ, went into the organ loft and asked to be allowed to play it. The old organist, in jealousy for his instrument, at first refused, but was afterward prevailed on to allow the great German composer to try the colossal "thunder" of the cathedral. And after standing by in an ecstasy of delight and amazement for a few moments, he suddenly laid his hands on the shoulders of the inspired musician and exclaimed: "Who are you? What is your name?" "Mendelsson," replied the player. "And can it be! that I had so nearly refused to let Mendelsson touch this organ!" How little the Lord's people know what they are doing when they refuse to let Christ have full possession of their entire life and evoke the full melody and harmony of which it is capable!

Will you refuse the greatest lover of all to touch your life with His love and to have full possession and you and to bring out of your life something incredible?

Or will you surrender all.

1 Thessalonians 5 [Read This Chapter](#)

5:23 agiason. First aorist active imperative of **agiawz**. To consecrate or set apart persons or things to God
Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Treasure

Tom Long asks the question in his book *Shepherds and Bathrobes*: "Have you ever noticed where God placed his treasure on this earth?" The treasure is not gold, but gospel. Not silver, but good news. Not hard, cold cash, but grace, love, and peace. He points out that God could have left it with the politicians, those who are responsible for collecting taxes, building schools, and passing laws, but God didn't. God could have left this treasure with Zechariah, the high priest, but his unbelief took him out of the picture. Tom Long states that God left the treasure in the least likely of places: in the love, care, and nurture of a first century peasant woman chosen as the "handmaiden of the Lord." God's treasure was left with the most powerless figure in the ancient world. Doesn't that tell you something about God's grace in today's world?
God's Downward Mobility, John A. Stroman, CSS Publishing Company, 1996.

Simplify

Certainly Mother Theresa was one of the greatest spiritual leaders of our time. A number of years ago Mother Theresa was to open a mission in New York City. A building was chosen and the diocese had it renovated. They had it spruced up with a fresh coat of paint. They put in new carpeting. They put in a large hot water heaters for the nuns. On the day the bishop drove up to visit Mother Theresa and the newly arrived nuns, he was greeted by a pile of trash on the curb. They had torn out the new carpet and the hot water heaters. Mother Theresa thanked the bishop but she never wavered in her conviction. If they are to serve the poor in the richest city in the richest country in the world then they must live simply. They prepared for their work by simplifying their lives. Their spiritual grounding depends upon their simplicity of life.