

FULLY FURNISHED

or

THE CHRISTIAN WORKER'S EQUIPMENT

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE WORKER'S CONSECRATION

IN climbing Snowdon, in North Wales, we were impressed on looking back, when about a third of the way to the summit, with the beauty of the scenery below; and as we look back upon our past life we are "transported with the view," and we are constrained to praise our loving Father for His goodness and mercy, which have followed and waited upon us, like two faithful attendants. But if we would reach Snowdon's summit, we must press on, and if we would excel in the Christian life, we must go forward and upward. One thought occurs to us again and again, as we are ascending the mountain: we think we are nearing the summit, but no, it is only a height, and not the height. So with the Christian life, there are heights above heights. In looking at and musing upon the subject of consecration, there are three lofty peaks that rise one above the other. These are illustrated in the three words which are rendered "**consecration**" in the Old Testament.

Let us notice the Scriptures in which these words occur, and also refer to others illustrating the different renderings.

First. "**Kadesh**." In II Chronicles 31:6, we have an illustration of the meaning of the word "**Kadesh**." In the account of the reformation effected by Hezekiah, in his separating from Israel everything attaching to heathen worship and practice, and his steadfast purpose to be loyal to the Lord's claims, we read: "**The children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the Lord their God.**" Mark, it is not said that they consecrated them to the Lord. The tithe was the Lord's portion, and was always to be set apart for Him, according to Leviticus 27:30; and if they failed to render that which He claimed, according to Malachi 3:8, God reckoned it robbery. The meaning of the word "**consecrated**," in the above quotation, is "*set apart*."

It is applied:

- to the seventh day - "**God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it**" (Genesis 2:3);
- to the first-born of Israel whom God chose for Himself - "**All the first-born are Mine: for on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto Me all the first-born in Israel**" (Numbers 3:13).

The same expression is used in reference to the consecration of Aaron and his sons - **“Thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons’ garments with him”** (Exodus 29:21); and in reference to the cities of refuge which were set apart for the manslayer mentioned in Joshua 20:7: **“They appointed Kadesh,”** &c. The term is similarly applied to the action of David in II Samuel 8:11, when he dedicated the spoils he had taken in battle, and the gifts sent by foreign potentates, to the Lord.

Second. **“Mah-lah.”** This word is used again and again in connection with the consecration of Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:9), and means **“to fill.”** It is frequently rendered **“full.”**

The Psalmist uses the word in speaking:

- Of God’s providential gifts, as **“The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord”** (Psalm 33:5),
- Of the riches of God (Psalm 104:24), and
- Of the mercy of God (Psalm 119:64). The marginal reading in connection with this word, *“Fill the hand,”* is given in Exodus 29:9; 32:29.

Third. **“Nazar.”** Here we are reminded of the consecration of the Nazarite in Numbers 6, where the word occurs again and again.

The same word is applied to the **“crown”** (Exodus 39:30), which was upon the mitre of the High Priest, denoting **“separation”** and **“holiness.”**

Now, taking these three words and their meanings in the light of the New Testament, we get a threefold meaning of Consecration, namely, Separation, Dedication, Appropriation.

I - *Separation to God.*

The condition of each one of us naturally, is, that we are separated from God.

The prophet’s description of Israel is true of all - **“Your sins have separated you from Me, and your iniquities have caused Me to hide My face from you.”**

The Lord Jesus was separated for the work of redemption, as in Israel’s early history the paschal lamb was separated to be slain. On the Cross, Christ was separated from God, when He cried in the anguish of His spirit, **“My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?”**

Christ endured this separation from God that we might be united to God. The believer’s separation to God pre-supposes many things, three of which are - (1) Reconciliation, (2) Redemption, (3) Occupation.

1. Reconciliation. The Apostle Peter, in speaking of the sufferings of Christ and their purpose, says,

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (I, Peter 3:18).

Observe, he does not say here that Christ died to save us from hell to Heaven, but to bring us to God. When the prodigal returned, it was to be reconciled to his father; not merely to escape the swine-troughs that he might enjoy the bounties of his father’s table, but to receive the father’s smile, feel the father’s kiss, hear the father’s words of welcome, and enjoy the father’s company. Even so, the purpose of Christ’s death was to remove the barrier which kept God from the sinner, and the sinner from God; and also to reconcile the sinner to God. Rotherham’s explanation of I Peter 3:18, is, “That He might introduce us to God.” Happy introduction, beginning the eternal friendship between God and the sinner!

2. Redemption. Redemption is a higher step than reconciliation.

The word ‘**redemption**’ is a compound word, one part meaning to “*buy back*,” and the other to “*set at liberty*.” The prodigal might have been reconciled to his father, and yet not have been free. For instance, if his prayer to be made a “**hired servant**” had been granted, he would have been reconciled to his father, but would not have enjoyed the same privileges and freedom as before. Now, the Lord, in His grace, has been pleased not only to bring us near to Himself, but to set us at liberty by virtue of the finished work of His beloved Son. Hence, the song which each believer takes up now, and which will occupy the Church of Christ in the coming ages, is, “**Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood**” (Revelation 5:9).

3. Occupation. The Apostle Paul, mentioning his service for the Lord, introduces himself to the Romans as a “**servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God**” (Romans 1:1). The very first cry of Paul when the Lord met him was, “**Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?**” And the call from God Paul recognized as a call to God, for Him to use His servant for His glory. As one separated unto the Gospel of God, he received his instructions from God. Paul had fellowship with God, such as Enoch in his day enjoyed, and he was used by Him to His praise.

We need to emphasize the words “**to God**,” because there have been those who have been separated from men, but have not been separated to God. Men have been separated to monasteries from their fellow-men; but how few have been separated to God in this self-imposed seclusion! Again and again do we find Paul referring to the fact that the believer is brought to God, and that he is to do everything as to God alone. In speaking of the conversion of the Thessalonians, in his letter to them, he refers to the fact in the following words:- “**Ye turned to God from idols**” (I Thessalonians 1:9); in declaring the purpose of God in sending him with the Gospel to the Gentiles, when before Agrippa, he said it was “**To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God**” (Acts 26:18). Because of our association with Christ in His death - for God reckons all that Christ did as done by us, because He did it on our account - we are to reckon ourselves “**dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord**” (Romans 6:11). Paul also says we are to yield ourselves “**unto God**” (Romans 6:13; 12:1); and to “**bring forth fruit unto God**” (Romans 7:4).

We have heard an Eastern parable which illustrates what we mean.

A sheik, one day meeting a woman carrying in her one hand a basin of water, while the other held a torch, eagerly inquired what she meant to do with each.

The woman replied, "I am going to put out the flames of hell with the water, and burn up the glories of Heaven with the torch."

"Why are you going to do this?" asked the sheik.

Her reply was, "That men may love God for what He is in Himself, and not for what they escape or receive."

That is it. We are separated to God to serve Him, to love Him, to follow Him, and to obey Him. It is sadly true that too many Christians sigh for the blessings of the Lord, and never long for Himself. Like Jacob, they will serve God for what they can get. "**Only bless me and I will serve Thee,**" is their language to God. They express their feelings in those lines of a well-known hymn, the apparent drift of which we deprecate:-

"Such blessings from Thy gracious hand
Our humble prayers implore;
And Thou shalt be our chosen Gael
And Portion evermore."

What we want is the spirit of Mary - "They have taken away My Lord." Oh! it was her Master she wanted. Hers was the truly blessed life, because she found her all in Him. Let us, realizing our separation to the Lord, leave behind all worldliness, and, like Israel, come clean out of Egypt. Let us walk in hallowed communion with Him, as Adam did before He sinned. Separated to do His bidding, as Moses was, when he did all that the Lord commanded him in connection with the Tabernacle, and separated to Him, we shall experience Elijah's courage to confront our Ahabs, while we are, like Elijah, conscious of the Lord's presence. Separated to Him to take Mary's place, we shall be spared the friction of Martha's service - fret and worry will give place to calmness. Separated to Him, we shall be ready to do His will and work, even as Christ did.

II - *Dedication to the Lord.*

As David dedicated to the Lord what he possessed (II Samuel 8:11), so should the believer hold all he has at the disposal of the Lord for His use and glory. It is an easy matter to sing, "My all is on the altar," and quite as easy to speak of consecration; but mere talk will not tell, sentiment is not sufficient, profession will not prevail. There must be the manifestation of the consecration in practical godliness, self-denial, and reflection of the spirit and ways of Christ.

A three-fold cord is not easily broken, so true consecration must be definite, continuous, and entire. Let us briefly note these three characteristics of consecration, as illustrating this point of dedication.

Consecration must be definite. When a man took upon himself the vow of the Nazarite, he had to be very definite. He had to abstain from strong drink, to keep away from dead bodies, and to let his hair grow long (Numbers 6:3-8).

As the Nazarite abstained from all that had to do with the vine, so there must be with us the separation from all that would tend to excite nature, and add fuel to the fire of passion.

As the Nazarite was to keep away from dead bodies, so must we keep away from all those who are dead in trespasses and sins; in a word, from the world and all that is in it - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Remember the word of the Lord on this - **“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead”** (Ephesians 5:14); and again, **“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing”** (II Corinthians 6:17).

The Nazarite was to let his hair grow long as a sign of his being under the authority of God. Paul reminds the Corinthians that long hair is a sign of subjection (I Corinthians 11:10- I 5), so are we to be under the control of Him whom we call Lord.

Let us understand, that definite dedication. means, that the whole being is open to the sunshine of God’s presence; that the whole nature is under the sway of Christ; and that spirit, soul, and body are to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Let us count the cost, as definite dedication claims from us:-

- The mortification of the old nature (Colossians 3:5; Romans 8:12, 13).
- The expulsion of all evil habits (Colossians 3:9; Galatians 5:24).
- The denial of self itself (Luke 9:23, 24).
- The enthronement of Christ in the heart (Ephesians 3:17; I Peter 3:15).
- Satisfaction in Christ alone (Matthew 11:29; Psalm 73:25).
- Delighting to do God’s will (I Thessalonians 5:18; Psalm 40:8).
- Aiming always for God’s glory (I Corinthians 10:31).

This brings us to another important consideration, namely, Consecration, in order to have lasting results, must be continuous. A boy was once asked if his father were a Christian, and he replied, “I think he was once; but he has not been working at it lately.” The boy’s answer may describe too many professors, who live an up-and-down life, because they do not maintain their attitude towards God as His consecrated ones; for bear in mind, consecration is an attitude maintained, as well as an act once for all. As I remember a good Irish brother aptly put it, “Consecration is an act once for all, and repeated for ever afterwards.”

Lastly, Consecration must be entire. There must be no keeping back part of the price (Acts 5:3). The Lord will not be satisfied, even though you present the greater part. He will have all or none. How many there are whose lives might be summed up, after the manner of the announcement placed in the window of an iron monger’s shop, “The bulk of our stock is of English manufacture.” Yes. The bulk, but not all.

The Lord wants all. He claims all. Let Him have all: then your life and being shall be to His glory.

You shall be like a well-tuned instrument, upon which the Lord will play to His praise. As a good Yorkshire Christian often said: "I am an instrument of ten strings: two eyes to look to Him; two ears to listen to His voice; two hands to work for Him; two feet to run on His errands; a tongue to speak His praise; and a heart to love Him alone."

III - *Appropriation of Christ.*

There was put into the hands of Aaron, at his consecration, that which he was to wave before the Lord. So in the case of the believer, God, in His grace, has treasured up in Christ all His fulness, that we may appropriate it, or better, that we may find Christ to meet our every need, and answer to all our deep spiritual necessities in life and service. This is what Paul desired, aimed at, and eagerly sought for, as given us in Philippians 3:8-12. His aspirations are expressed thus:- "**That I may win Christ;**" "**That I may know Him;**" "**That I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.**" His desire was threefold.

1. Winning Christ. The Apostle is not here speaking of salvation, or of possessing Christ. His testimony on this point is calm and clear.

Listen to what he says in acknowledging Christ's ownership of him: "**Whose I am, and whom I serve**" (Acts 27:23). But he is here expressing his determination to see what are the riches which are in Christ for him.

An every-day occurrence may help to explain the term "winning." It is a common expression for miners, when they commence working a new coal pit, to speak of "winning the coal" They do not mean to win the right to the mine - that belongs to the proprietor; but they mean to get that which already belongs to him. In like manner, "winning Christ" means, that we seek to discover the fulness of grace and power that there is in Christ, and how He meets all our need for walk, warfare, and work.

2. Knowing Christ.

Again, when the Apostle aspires to "**know Christ,**" he does not mean that he does not already know Him. "**I know whom I have believed**" (II Timothy 1:12).

This is the certainty of faith; doubt as to this, would have produced no-such ringing witness; but he is here aspiring to know Christ in a practical sense, for he believes that to know Christ is to trust Him; as the Psalmist says: "**They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee**" (Psalm 9:10).

The more we know Christ, the more we shall trust Him.

Charnock remarks: "The brightest needles move quickest, and stick fastest to the loadstone. The clearer our knowledge, the closer our adherence to Christ."

To know Christ is not only to trust Him, but to love and to obey Him.

When Columbanus ventured to suppress the ardent thirst for knowledge in his aspirant Lucinus, reminding him that undue love of knowledge had shipwrecked some souls, his disciple humbly remonstrated, "My father, if I learn to know God, I shall never offend Him, for they only offend Him who know Him not." Let us take to heart the Lord's remonstrance with Israel:

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider" (Isaiah 1:3).

- To know Christ as our Saviour is to be saved by Him from sinning.
- To know Christ as our Sovereign is to be ruled by Him.
- To know Christ as our Sanctifier is to let Him manifest His own life through us.
- To know Christ as our Satisfier is to delight only in Him.
- To know Christ as the One, who died for us, is to die to sin with Him.
- To know Christ in His resurrection power is to live to God by Him.
- To know Christ as our Cross-Bearer is to take up our Cross daily and to follow Him.

Oh, to know HIM in the truest and fullest sense of the word! [81]

3. Apprehending Christ. Among the things that were put into the hands of Aaron at his consecration, were the breast and shoulder of the ram of consecration.

Now the shoulder in Scripture is associated with strength, and the breast with affection. Connecting these two thoughts and Paul's desire to apprehend Christ, may we not say that he longed to apprehend Christ in the fulness of His love, and in the energy of His power? Yea, he himself expressed this when writing to the Ephesians, and praying for them; for he uses the same word as he does to the Philippians: "**May be able to comprehend** (apprehend) **with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height**" (Ephesians 3:15, 19) - of what?

"The love of Christ," says one. Yes, more - Christ Himself: the breadth of His purpose, the length of His love, the depth of His sufferings, and the height of His power.

- Why has Christ in His love apprehended us? That we may apprehend Him in His love.
- Why has He by His power quickened us together with Himself? That we may lay hold of His power (Ephesians 1:19 to 2:1).
- Why has He in His gracious purpose laid hold of us as we were posting on to perdition? That we may grasp His purpose and enter into His secret, and be initiated into His plan, so that we may let all go that is not for His glory, and find our delight and pleasure in Himself. This we assuredly shall do as we apprehend Him.

~ end of chapter 7

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