

THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS

by

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CONSECRATION

TEXT: “And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy place before the oracle, and they were not seen without; and there they are unto this day. There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord” (I Kings 8:6-11).

I WISH to begin a study of the subject of Consecration. I believe it to be, in the common apprehension of believers, greatly encumbered with misconceptions. Is consecration God’s act or man’s act? Is it partly man’s act and partly God’s act? If so, what is man’s part in it?

Beyond doubt the subject is vaguely felt to be important. The religious literature of the time insists upon this importance, and very rarely do Christians come together in conventions, or in any large gathering, without appointing hours for “consecration meetings.” And, in fact, there is a great deal of so-called “consecrating” done. The Christian Endeavor societies appoint monthly consecration meetings, and so, in a certain sense, there is a

PERPETUAL CONSECRATION

work going on. There is a great deal of prayer about consecration, and a great deal of talk about it, and a great many directions how to do it, and a great deal of doubt, I believe, at the end, whether it has been done after all—the doubt, of course, growing out of the fact that so many people are continually “re-consecrating” themselves.

Now, is consecration something that requires to be done over and over again? If it is, we ought to know it. We ought to know what degree of frequency there should be in the act of consecration, so that we may be very sure that we keep consecrated all of the time.

I am the more surprised by this confusion, because God has, so to speak, prepared the subject for our study. He has put into the Bible

TWO GREAT TYPICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

of consecration, one in the consecration of the temple, and the other in the consecration of the priesthood. And you know that both of these types converge upon us, the believers of this dispensation, for we are called both “**temples**” and “**priests**.”

- “**For ye are the temple of the living God**” (II Corinthians 6:16).
- “**What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?**” (I Corinthians 6:19).
- “**Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood**” (I Peter 2:9).
- “**Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God**” (Revelation 1:5, 6).

The temple was for the *possession*, the abiding place of God; the priesthood, for the *service* of God; and for each there was an act—consecration. The Shekinah did not take possession of the temple until the act of consecration was complete; nor could a priest, though born to the priesthood, enter upon his service until duly consecrated.

My purpose, then, is to study the Temple-type of Consecration.

1. Now, first of all, consider what a wonderful structural analogy there is between that old typical temple, and these living temples which we are.

The temple, as you remember, was in three parts: the court, or outer enclosure, which was public and obvious, and into which any might enter; the holy place, coming next to the court, which was the ordinary place of worship, as the court was of sacrifice; and then, opening out of the holy place, the holy of holies, into which the high priest only—type of Christ, our High Priest—might enter, and which was filled with the glory of the presence of God.

Just so, the living temple is in three parts— the body, outward, obvious and answering to the outer court, in which sacrifice was offered (for remember, Christ “**bore our sins in his own body**”), the soul, or “**heart**,” the seat of affections, desires, and of the will (and, therefore, the sphere of worship, for worship is loving adoration and praise) and, lastly, connected with the soul most intimately in some way which we do not precisely understand, but yet distinct from it, the spirit, the highest part of man, the seat of the reason, the understanding, the imagination—in a word, the mind. And, just as the body answers to the temple court, and the soul to the holy place, so the spirit is, in these living temples, the holy of holies.

2. Recur now to the passage which is our text, and which describes the act by which the temple was consecrated, and we shall see how the type helps us to understand what our consecration must be if it is to have any real meaning.

I think I am, most of all, struck by the exceeding simplicity of that act.

The priests simply put the Ark of the Covenant into the holy of holies, and then withdrew. God did the rest.

And the significance of the act is as simple as the act itself. That ark was, perhaps, the most important, the most all-inclusive of all the types of Christ. When God was showing to Moses the patterns in the mount, the first of them all was the ark. In a very real sense, the tabernacle was built around that ark. That ark with its shadowing cherubim and radiant

SHEKINAH GLORY

was the center of Israel's worship and service, and, sprinkled with atoning blood, was Israel's mercy-seat. And, just as the temple was, as to the human side, consecrated when the ark was installed in its inmost apartment, so, when we, by a deliberate, definite act, have surrendered to Him for His exclusive habitation and possession, our whole being, body, soul and spirit, are consecrated.

It is when we come to consider the temple-type in its several parts that we may with certainty know not only how to proceed, but that the act is, indeed, complete. Remember, with the divine part of consecration we have no concern. God may safely be trusted to do His part.

First, then, the priests carried the ark in. God did not send an angel to do that, nor in any way assist by supernatural means. It was an action entirely upon the human side. It was the voluntary, deliberate act of the priests.

Secondly. They carried it into the holy of holies. They did not stop in the court, nor even in the holy place. They kept no part of the temple for themselves. Into its innermost recesses, into that most secret room, made beautiful and costly with gold and precious marbles, and cunning work of the engraver—the very place where pride might most easily entrench itself—they carried the ark.

Thirdly. They drew out the staves. That was an act of exceeding symbolical beauty. You know what the staves were: they were the wooden rods by which the ark was carried from place to place, and there was an express command that during the wilderness wanderings the staves should not be taken out. You see the significance of the action? It was a finality! They did not intend to do that again. They had surrendered the holy of holies to the Lord for an everlasting possession. Israel had many recurring ceremonies, but “reconsecration” was not one of them. They meant it. It was once for all.

Fourthly. They went out. They did not remain to share the holy of holies with the Lord. And you observe, it was **“when the priests were come out of the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the Lord.”**

I am well persuaded that the cloud would never have filled the house if the priests had remained within. They went out.

Observe, the surrender of the holy of holies was in itself the surrender of the temple. To reach it the ark passed through the court; passed through the holy place. There was no pause,

NO PIECEMEAL SURRENDER,

no separate ceremony for these outer parts of the edifice. To surrender the holy of holies was to surrender the court and the holy place. It is as if some conqueror, taking possession of a surrendered fortress, should pass through the outer defenses, through the inner defenses, and then into the inner citadel and there plant his imperial banner in sign of undisputed occupancy of the whole.

Precisely in this way is consecration presented in the New Testament.

- **“Present your bodies a living sacrifice”**—the court.
- **“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts”**—the holy place.
- **“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”** — the mind, the holy of holies.

3. Now let us make all of this personal. Perhaps we shall be ready to agree, first of all, that

OUR CONCEPTION OF CONSECRATION

has been poor and inadequate. We have been thinking of service, simply, and that in connection with the body; “take my hands, take my lips, take my feet,” and so on, in a kind of sentimental, anatomical way. We have not thought of this temple-type and what it signifies; of being God-filled, God-possessed, quite apart from considerations of service. I grow very weary of the perpetual spurring of God’s dear people to service, service, as if any father ever did care so much to have his children toiling for him, as loving and trusting him. And the more so as the God-possessed Christian invariably does serve. No. There is a higher thought: the enthronement of Jesus as Lord of all.

How is it with us, beloved? Have we, by a definite act of the will, heartily, joyfully, brought Jesus into His own, saying as we passed through the court, “This body, O Lord, is thine; rule it as thou wilt; choose thou its service?” As we passed through the holy place, “Rule thou in my heart, thou Peace of God,” and as we came into the spirit: “Here abide, adorable Jesus; subject my reason to the authority of thy word; set my imagination at holy work;

SHINE INTO MY SPIRIT

the radiant glory of thine own, and from this innermost place rule all the temple”?

Then, have we drawn out the staves? You know what that means—it is not to be done over again. I know what you are thinking:

“Perhaps I did not do it well.” I dare say not. The priests may have moved very awkwardly; their feelings may not have been what they ought to have been; their conception of the meaning of what they were doing may have been imperfect. But this they did—they took the ark in and drew out the staves.

And again: When you brought Christ in did you retire? Or, did you stay in with Him? Has not that been the trouble?

I remember once hearing a rather excitable young lady testify in a meeting in New England. She said over and over again: "It is Jesus and I." A dear brother, who sat on the platform with me, whispered: "I have known that girl eight or nine years, in fact, I was her pastor, and that is just the trouble with her. It is Jesus and the girl. If she can ever get where she will say: 'It is Jesus only,' she will have a more even experience."

4. Lastly, one word as to the divine side of consecration. The priests went out and left God in possession. It was then that the divine part of consecration was performed, and not till then. The Shekinah of God filled the house with a glory-cloud which always abode between the wings of the cherubim over the mercy seat, and which spread and increased until all the holy place and the very courts were filled with the radiance. That was God's act.

GOD ACCEPTED THE CONSECRATION

when the priests had put Him where He belonged and when there was no door shut to Him anywhere. There was no shining when He was in the court. There was no shining when He was in holy place, nor even when He was put in the most holy place; nor even when the staves were drawn out; it was not until the priests went out, setting themselves aside, disowning all lordship over the place, and left that building to God that the place was filled with glory. And till that was done, nothing was done.

You know that what the Shekinah was to the temple of old, the Holy Spirit is to these temples which we are.

- **"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"** (Ephesians 2:22).

- **"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?"** (I Corinthians 6:19).

This, then, is the tremendous typical significance of this type of the divine side of consecration—it is the filling of the Holy Spirit. Think of it! The answer of God to the heart-felt, sincere surrender of the whole being to the possession of Jesus Christ is the filling of the whole man, spirit, soul and body; with the Holy Spirit. How insignificant in comparison the human side, and yet how unspeakably important, since the fullness of the Spirit's presence depends upon it.

Friends, we walk by faith, not by sight. The priests of old could see the glory—with which

GOD FILLED THE HOUSE

—we must believe He is there. Ah! just there is the fatal gap with so many. Multitudes in all sincerity surrender the three-fold being to Jesus; and then, because they do not feel the Spirit in fuller manifestation, doubt—and repeat the process again and again.

Remember, it is not “consecration to service,” nor power for service which is before us in the Temple-type; that will be considered when the Priest-type is before us. It is consecration unto possession.

After all, can anything be simpler than real, biblical consecration. It is only putting God in His place, giving Him access everywhere, and then going out and leaving Him to the control of that which has been given to Him. Then God will do His part. He will take possession.

Now, just a few questions.

Have we, as believers, ever definitely brought Jesus into the temple at all? Have we not regarded Him as an external Master, to whom we gave something which He might use, just as I might take that pencil and write with it?

Have we brought Him within? Has that been the thought of our consecration? Have we given Him, by a definite act, the outer court—our bodies? If we have done that, have we, each one, brought Him into the holy place—our hearts—and said: “Now reign here, reign over me, over my desires and over my affections”? If we have done that, have we severally brought Him, by a definite act, once for all, into our spirits, and said, “Reign over my reason,

TAKE MY IMAGINATION

and set it to picturing the glories of heaven and the beautiful things of God, and redeem it from the things it is too much occupied with”?

And have we said: “Take this intellectual pride of mine, Lord Jesus; I am a poor fool; just come in, and do my thinking for me”?

Then, have we drawn out the staves? Have we said: “Lord, now you are brought in once for all and I draw out the staves; I am not going to do this again next month; I do it now”? And then, having said that, have we not gone out ourselves?

How is it with us? Are we living as if this whole wonderful temple—body, soul and spirit—were no longer ours? It was ours, but we moved out and God moved in, and now it is His. Just when it is that way, I am very sure the glory of God will fill the house.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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