

**FIRST WORDS**  
**TO**  
**YOUNG CHRISTIANS**

by

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**CHAPTER TWELVE -**  
**CONSECRATION**

ON a beautiful summer day you may have seen the clouds curtain the heavens with darkness, until all nature seemed to shudder under the threat of a coming tempest. Then the thunder-cloud is rifted by the blazing thunder-bolt, the teeming shower is discharged, the clouds pass away, and the sky is lovelier and the atmosphere more balmy and healthful than before.

So it is with the soul to whom GOD's salvation from sin has come. GOD says to him: "**I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions,**" and there is joy and sunshine in his soul. The dark cloud of sin has rolled away from his mind, and the love of the infinite FATHER falls upon his soul with celestial light. He can look up to Heaven, down to hell, and all around him in the world, and give utterance to the bold challenge: "**Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.**"

The Gospel saves not merely from the punishment of sin, from hell and eternal woe, but from the power of sin. It does this to men of all classes and nations. It takes hold of the very worst - none too bad, none sunk too low, none wandered too far, but this salvation can reach and save him. It takes hold of the heart of the very vilest, and never leaves him till he is rejoicing in glory, and striking the strings of the golden harp to the praise of his blessed Redeemer!

And yet our Lord has told us that our life on earth is to be marked by struggle and trial. He told the disciples that it was through much tribulation that they must enter the kingdom. There was no keeping hid the trials of a holy life. He told them that they might expect a steady antagonism to their religion and their attempts to do good. This they did not fully realize, and they must have been greatly astonished when the storm of the world's scorn and indignation and malignity burst upon their heads.

We live in a time when the danger is greater to our souls than in the days of fiery persecution. When a form of religion is in a manner popular, when attendance upon public worship gives a certain respectability to a man, and when gain can be made of godliness, then allurements of a worldly kind proves itself

## MORE DANGEROUS TO ETERNAL INTERESTS

than direct persecution. Persecution, with its loud blasphemies, with its hands red with blood, brought out the graces of GOD's SPIRIT in a race of glorious martyrs who stood steadfast and immoveable for their principles, and the Gospel came out of the conflict triumphant.

But the world now comes with its polite and smooth speech, speaking favorably of many of the outward things of religion, but really sneering at all that constitutes its vital power. So many become enfeebled in their Christian life, get to have early consciences, throw themselves upon the tide of fashion, and make shipwreck of their souls!

We need more of the firmness of the old Puritan, who when told that he was too stern and precise about some things in religion, said:

"Sir, I serve a precise GOD."

It was said of a good man that he seemed sometimes to make little things great, but that he never made great things little.

We need now consecration to GOD, as much, yea, more than those who lived in the stormy ages. By consecration to CHRIST I do not mean a new conversion, as some have called it, nor a state of sinless perfection as others have claimed. It is not a thing of sudden impulses and emotions, developed in a moment of excitement. It is simply the soul

### TRUSTING WHOLLY IN JESUS,

washed from all its sins in His precious blood, and clinging with an undying grasp to His cross. It is giving yourselves up to CHRIST for ever, as bought with a price, and feeling that you are no longer your own.

If ever there was a man entirely consecrated, it was Paul, and he expressed it in the words: "**God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.**" "**I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.**" He expressed it in that wonderful prayer when he asked that we might be "**filled with all the fulness of God.**"

And this we get only in CHRIST, for in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

To try to get up a consecration out of CHRIST, by resolutions and promises of our own, is like trying to build up a wall of sand, that runs down as fast as you cast it up; or trying to carry water in a leaking pitcher. An old writer says, "Wisdom out of CHRIST is damning folly; righteousness out of CHRIST is guilt and condemnation; and redemption out of CHRIST is bondage." The consecrated soul has given up his will to be governed by GOD's will. He seeks to be of one mind with GOD.

He does not measure himself nor his doings by the world's standard, but by what the Lord has

spoken. To be of a strong, steady purpose to glorify GOD by doing those things that are pleasing in His sight, such a Christian seeks to make the Lord JESUS his bright pattern and example in all things. To have the same tender love for souls which He had, the same forgiving spirit to enemies, the same boldness and consistency in defending the right, the same willingness to help the suffering and the oppressed, the same prayerfulness and love for communion with heaven; in short, to be as an old writer says: "A little CHRIST."

This was the one great aim and purpose for which CHRIST came into the world. "**He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves.**" He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and make us a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He tells us that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments. A holy life is the only evidence that we have a living and not a dead faith; and an evidence that the world cannot deny, of the reality of religion. A holy life is just a ripening for heaven, for heaven is a place where nothing unholy can enter. Indeed, if it were possible for an unholy person to enter there, it would be no heaven to him. He would not be in a state to enjoy it. One reason that the true Christian longs to get to heaven is that he will be sinless there.

I have met a beautiful illustration of this somewhere in my reading. It is as follows:

"If a child had been born, and spent all its life, in the Mammoth Cave, how impossible it would be for him to comprehend the upper world! Parents might tell him of its life, its light, its beauty, and its sounds of joy; they might heap up the sands into mounds, and try to show him by stalactites how grass, flowers, and trees grow out of the ground; till at length by laborious thinking, the child would fancy he had gained a true idea of the unknown land.

"And yet, though he longed to behold it, when it came that he was to go forth, it would be with great regret for the familiar crystals and rock-hewn rooms, and the quiet that reigned therein. But when he came up, some May morning with ten thousand birds singing in the trees, and the heavens bright and blue and full of sunlight, and the winds blowing softly through the young leaves, all aglitter with dew, and the landscape stretching away green and beautiful to the horizon, with what raptures would he gaze about him, and see how poor were all the fancyings and interpretations which were made within the cave of the things which grew and lived without! how he would wonder that he could have ever regretted to leave the silence and dreary darkness of his old abode!

"So, when we emerge from this cave of earth into that land where spring growths are, and where is eternal summer, how shall we wonder that we could have clung so fondly to this dark and barren life!"

True happiness on earth is only to be found in GOD's favor; and that favor is only to be found at the cross.

**CHRIST is to us the manifested GOD. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."**

CHRIST is the means by which the great fountain of GOD's love is made accessible to us, so that

## **WE CAN DRINK AND LIVE.**

We are so constituted that we are restless and uneasy and dissatisfied till we find peace with GOD; and it is for us, free as the air we breathe! We are a burden to ourselves, our own tormentors, till we come to Him to get rest.

When we come to Calvary, GOD reveals His loving presence to us, and the still small voice whispers of love. There we find a hiding-place, not from justice, for justice was fully satisfied, - but from our own guilty fears. There the soul finds GOD as its portion for ever, and no other portion can satisfy!

Souls seek a portion in the world, but their groans of disappointment come back to our ears on every breeze. They seek it in money, in friends, in fame, in ties, in a constant whirl of gay amusements, and many in gross animal delights; but from them all comes the cry of dissatisfaction. And while they are devising new ways of finding bliss, the great mower, death, comes and cuts them away.

When we turn to GOD, through CHRIST, He is ever ready to pardon our sins, to pity our weakness, to strengthen our powers, and to glorify our immortal nature with the fulness of His love. We can turn from all our sin and frailty and trouble, our broken vows and baffled resolutions, to the strength of the eternal GOD. Trust in the Lord Jehovah, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength! Nearer and nearer to Him as the great centre of blessedness, your soul mount up on wings as eagles!

Let your consecration to your GOD be hearty and complete. Let the solemn words of the Bible draw and bind you. Ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price, even with the blood of the Son of GOD. Not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, were we redeemed. It is then absolutely dishonest to feel that anything we have is our own, and to be devoted to selfish purposes. What have we got that we have not received, and that too for the purpose of glorifying GOD? The noblest use to which anything can be put, is to use it in the service of the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

Our bodies are not our own. This is the lowest part of our nature, the part that sprang from the earth and goes back to it again. It is the habitation of the soul, during our earthly probation, and the agent by which the soul puts forth the efforts to do good. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, and the organization of our bodies shows forth the wisdom of our Creator in such a manner as to strike the thoughtful mind with awe.

But we are to employ our bodily powers for GOD. If we have physical strength, it should be used for His glory. It is a thing not to be proud of, but to be thankful for, and to be laid out in works of usefulness, and in helping to bear the infirmities of the weak. Our blessed Lord had a body like us, subject to the same infirmities, His powers liable to be tired, His heart liable to be distressed, and His feelings keen to feel reproach as we are.

Yet it was in that body He did good, yea, went about continually doing good.

Let our feet be employed on errands of mercy, and our hands in works of benevolence. Our eyes are to seek out the needy and the perishing; and our ears to hear the cry of the distressed, and drink in the promises of GOD. We are to be careful of our health, that we may work longer and better for CHRIST. The vigor derived from our food is to be given back to GOD in honest work, such as will be well-pleasing in His sight. The body is not to be made an instrument of mere selfish indulgence, but an agent by which we shall glorify GOD, and benefit our fellow-men on earth.

Our souls are not our own. GOD breathed into man and he became a living soul. That soul has the stamp of GOD's immortality upon it. It must live as long as He lives. When the sun shall have shot forth its last ray, and all the hosts of the stars shall have been quenched in darkness, the soul shall still live in immortal youth.

The possession of such a wonderful gift makes us start back with fright at ourselves. As has been said by some one, if we were assured that the butterfly that flutters in the summer breeze, or the bird that sings on the tree, had begun a life that could never end, with what interest would we look at them. So every child we see, every human being we meet, we know can never die - must live somewhere, in some condition forever!

CHRIST, who came from His throne, at the very summit of glory, to save souls; who wept over them when He saw them rushing on to ruin; and who died to save them, knew as no other could know, the worth of such a soul, and He says:

**"What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?"** That soul, with its vast powers and capacities, its wonderful range of conception, its capability of enjoying or suffering, to be lost, is a greater calamity than it would be for the whole material universe to be swept out of existence!

Now we have such a soul given us, but it is not our own, in the sense that we can do what we please with it, and go unpunished. We have no right to destroy such a soul. Every provision has been made for its purification and perfection in bliss. The SPIRIT of GOD offers to come and dwell in it, and guide it to heights of attainment, both here and hereafter, of which we now are not able to form a conception.

Let, then, all our powers, without reserve, be dedicated to GOD's service. Let our memories be stored with His thoughts and words. Let reason, judgment, conscience, imagination, emotions, and feelings, all be consecrated to Him who laid down His life for us.

This is but a reasonable service, and to hold back is to rob GOD.

It is truly melancholy to think how many noble intellects have been prostituted to the worst of purposes. Men of noble talents, who might have swept the harpstring with a Milton's hand, have written works pandering to the vices of men. To put jests into the mouths of bar-room loafers against religion and virtue; to stimulate the depravity of youth, and to strengthen in the wrong the bad ways of tottering old age; to throw the charms of eloquence and the witcheries of genius around deadly errors that lead men down to destruction - this is the bad eminence to which they have attained. What a fearful account must such render to the JUDGE of the whole earth!

Our time is not our own. Time is very closely allied to eternity. Every hour of time is laying up results for heaven or hell. Time lost can never be recalled. All the regrets, tears, and prayers of ages could not bring back to us one misspent day. And yet men often speak of time as a burden hanging upon their hands, and exercise great ingenuity to devise means (as they say) "to kill time."

Could we only have spent one day with the Lord JESUS when He was upon earth, and have seen how He spent His time, what a rebuke it would have been to our trifling! He went about continually doing good. From morning till night He was at His work of love, and His motto was: **"I must work the work of Him that sent Me, while it is day."** **"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"**

Time is a sacred talent to be accounted for, and should be employed, not for our own personal gratification, but for the honor of the Great Master. And time thus employed is happy time. It leaves no sting behind in the memory, but is pleasant to reflect upon on a death-bed.

Our money is not our own. As a proof that GOD does not regard the money a man has as his own, He often takes it away from: him in His providence, and leaves him in poverty. Money is needed to spread abroad the Gospel, to circulate the Bible, to feed the hungry, and to nourish the sick. To accomplish these things money must be consecrated to GOD by those who feel His vows upon them. We have no right to draw upon the funds of GOD to supply our lusts and pride, but only our necessities. Real good for time and eternity can be done with it now. The cause of truth and humanity is in straits for want of it. And in the great day of account, what will all the wealth in the world seem in comparison to the salvation of one single soul?

"I have nothing to spare," is often the plea of a sordid reluctance; but a very different estimate will be found in the light of a burning world. Then those who, by acts of self-denial, have sought to bless the world, will hear the JUDGE say: **"Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."**

But I need not enumerate farther. The principle is plain. We have nothing that we can really call our own - nothing but our sins! The gifts that GOD has given us were imparted not to promote self-indulgence, but for the common good of the world. And the great truth that we have been bought with the blood of JESUS leaves us under lasting obligation to spend, and be spent,

## IN HIS SERVICE

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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