



## CONSECRATION

### QUEST LESSON D-5

The Problem: Dwight L. Moody was the great layman evangelist of the second half of the nineteenth century. From 1860 to the time of his death in 1899, he brought thousands to Christ. At a meeting which Moody attended in 1872, Henry Varley said in a quiet way, "The world has yet to see what God can do with and for and through and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to him." The next weekend Moody was sitting in the balcony of Spurgeon's Tabernacle listening attentively as this other great preacher unfolded the Gospel. As he listened, Moody's mind was occupied with the words of Varley from the weekend before. "The world has yet to see! With and for and through and in a man." Varley didn't say the man had to be brilliant, or educated, or rich, or famous - just a man wholly consecrated to God. Moody said to the Lord, "Well, by the Holy Spirit in me, I'll be one of those men." Tears of joy began streaming down his cheeks. Sympathetic Christians went to speak with him, thinking that he was under great conviction. But they learned that he was weeping for the joy of being dedicated to a great purpose for God.

Moody stands high in the list of those who have demonstrated what God can do with the limited human nature of those who are consecrated to His will. Still, the world has yet to see what God can do with the person who is wholly consecrated to His will. It saw it once in the life of Jesus Christ. Such consecration has only been imperfectly reproduced in other men.

God calls for total consecration! What does that involve? The word "consecration" means "devotion," "dedication," "being set apart for a holy use," "the act of making or declaring sacred." Jesus was wholly devoted to the task of living a sinless life and of paying the price for our sin. He prayed, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). To be sanctified is to be made holy by the indwelling Holy Spirit and so set apart for the Lord's service.

But how can sinful human beings like us ever have such an experience? How can we yield all of ourselves to God? Is it worth it to us? What do we give up, and what do we take on? How do we make the kind of surrender that God wants? It seems impossible for us to change the direction of our lives and give up things that we enjoy so that we can be spiritually what God has in mind for us. Do we have to shut ourselves away from the world and refuse to live normal lives, associating with people, carrying on our professions, and raising our families? What does God want of us? What is the consecration in the Bible, the meaning of the term? Let us turn to the Scriptures and find out.

#### Objectives

First, we shall discover that by nature we are alienated from God. Dedication to God's will is quite foreign to our natural dispositions.

Second, consecration means that the whole heart must be yielded to God.

Third, we shall consider what we have to give up and what we gain when we are wholly consecrated to the Lord.

Fourth, it is important to realize that the only effective motivation for this kind of life is love for Christ.

Fifth, how do we surrender to God? Our efforts to do what we believe is right are so often frustrated by our own natures and the circumstances of our lives that we give up in despair. How can we be what Christ wants us to be?

## I. By Nature We Are Alienated From God

The hardest battle we fight in life is the conquest of self. Because our natures are fallen, we are constantly subject to evil propensities, which we yield to much more naturally than to chosen desires that we know to be in harmony with God's will. The Bible vividly describes the spiritual state of the person who is not surrendered to Christ.

### The Word

1. How does the Apostle Paul describe the natural condition of the person who has no relationship with Christ? Ephesians 2:1-3.
2. Who takes captive the person who is not controlled by divine power? 2 Timothy 2:26.
3. What vivid imagery did Isaiah use to describe the spiritual state of people who are not consecrated to God? Isaiah 1:5-6

Explanation: There are two major forces in our world competing for man's allegiance. They are God and Satan. If you are not allied to God, you are controlled by Satan. There is no neutral ground. Without the power of the word of Jesus Christ in your life, you are automatically a citizen of the dominion of darkness. The desires of your fallen nature cannot be overcome and your mind cannot be kept in channels which the Bible identifies as pure and holy. Your will is not strong enough to overcome Satan's, and he and his myriads of demons, who are roaming our world, are able to induce you to move in directions that your better judgment tells you are wrong. The only solution is a relationship with Jesus Christ. To be allied to Him is to have available the only power in the universe that can counteract the forces of evil.

Relevance: Your personal problem with desires and habits that you cannot overcome can only be solved as you come to know Jesus Christ. You may be strong in some areas of life because these are not your problem areas. But in respect to your besetting sins, there is only one source of overcoming power; that is the power of Christ.

## II. The Whole Heart Must Be Yielded To God

God is not willing to accept partial consecration to Him. He wants us to place all our trust in Him and give Him our entire lives. To retain some things that we know are contrary to God's will, but which we really enjoy, is to forfeit a relationship with Christ.

### The Word

4. What degree of surrender to His will does Jesus want? Luke 14:33; Matthew 10:37-39.
5. With how much of our hearts are we to love God? Matthew 22:37.
6. Under what circumstances can we find a meaningful and lasting relationship with God? Jeremiah 29:13.

Explanation: When Jesus said, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33), He did not intend to teach that we must forsake all the good things in our lives before we can be regarded as true Christians. God requires different degrees of sacrifice from different people. Jesus was urging that our love for God and our wholehearted consecration to Him should result in a willingness to serve Him in any way He might direct. If our love for home and loved ones exceeds our love for Him, we have put them in His place, and we cannot be His disciples. Any person or thing that comes between you and God becomes your god. Christ wants our total affection and dedication. Then He gives us, in addition, the most meaningful and satisfying human relationships as well.

Relevance: Your greatest happiness is to be found in giving your whole heart to Christ. Your life lacks the fullness of joy and spiritual vitality without a heart union with Christ. You can achieve your true potential as a personality and character only as you are wholly consecrated to Christ.

### III. What Do We Give Up And What Do We Gain?

As we come to Christ, we must give up everything that would separate us from Him. The things that separate one person from the Lord may be quite different from those that alienate another person from Him. It is in this area of sacrifice for Christ that we must be guided by the conviction of the Holy Spirit and by our own intelligent evaluation of His will for our lives. Always we must remember that what we take on far exceeds in value what we give up.

#### The Word

7. What did Jesus ask the rich young ruler to give up? Mark 10:21.
8. By contrast, how much of his wealth did Zacchaeus give up? Luke 19:8.
9. List a few of the idols in people's lives that Jesus asks them to give up
  - a. 1 Timothy 6:10
  - b. Psalm 49:12; John 5:44
  - c. Proverbs 21:17; 2 Peter 2:13
10. Does God want our responses to His conviction to be based on emotion or reason? Isaiah 1:18.
11. What supreme gifts does Christ give us when we consecrate our lives wholly to Him? John 10:28; 14:27; 1 John 5:4.

Explanation: The wealth of the rich young ruler was the idol in his life. Jesus knew that unless he gave it all up it would crush out all spiritual life. Zacchaeus was not asked to make such a comprehensive sacrifice. He gave half of his goods to the poor and restored fourfold what he had taken dishonestly. The Apostle Paul gave up everything so that he could be a traveling evangelist for Christ. Yet to him it was no sacrifice (Philippians 3:7-8). He was able to say, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

The Lord would have us trust to His guidance for our individual lives, and to consider intelligently what He would have us do personally in His service. There is no indication in Scripture that hasty, emotional decisions in regard to our duty are acceptable to God. Each person is to have his own task in life and to follow the specific leading of the Lord in his Christian service (see 1 Corinthians 7:20-24).

The gifts of eternal life, peace with God, and power to overcome our human weaknesses and sins far outweigh in value anything that we may be asked to surrender. Christ asks us to give up nothing that would be for our best good to retain. And He bestows upon us the riches of heaven.

Relevance: Have you consecrated all you are and have to Christ? There is great joy in total surrender of your heart to Him.

### IV. Love For Christ Is Our Motivation

Changing your lifestyle to become a Christian is a heavy burden unless you do it out of love for Christ. When you consider His sacrifice for you, the surrender of all you have to Him is a pleasure not a burden.

#### The Word

12. What did Christ do to win our love and loyalty for Him? Isaiah 53:5; Titus 2:14.
13. What does love for Christ do for us? John 14:23

Explanation: If Christ's love led Him to leave the perfection of heaven so that He might redeem us from this evil world and transform us into sons and daughters of God, why should we question whether we should give all for Him. With His love reigning in our hearts, we want to follow His will for our lives. There is no substitute for the presence of the Deity in our hearts or the Holy Spirit. Jesus envisioned His people as having such a fellowship with Him and the Father that they would be bound together in a unity of love. (See John 17:20-22).

Relevance: It is no sacrifice for you to surrender all to Christ when you behold His love. Calvary is the greatest evidence of the infinite love God has for fallen mankind. Nothing in life begins to compare in significance with the love of Christ for you personally. If you lose all else and retain that gift, you have eternal life. To belong to Christ is to have the glorious riches of heaven at your disposal and to have the assurance of a place in glory with Him.

#### V. How Do We Surrender All To God?

The Bible answer to that question is explained beautifully in the following statement: "Many are inquiring, 'How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?' You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart; you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus, your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him." (Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, p. 47).

#### The Word

14. What did Paul say about the strength of his will apart from Christ? Romans 7:18
15. What choice did the prophets offer ancient Israel? Joshua 24:15; 1 Kings 18:21.
16. How did Jesus indicate that believing in Him is a matter of personal choice? John 12:36, 44-48; (compare John 6:28-29).

Explanation: The Bible teaches that human will apart from Christ is powerless to perform the good things that are chosen. Before he knew Christ, Paul could choose to do right because it was right, but he could not put his choice into action. We have the power to choose either to accept or reject Christ, but we do not have the power to do righteous works without His presence in our life. To live as a disciple of Christ involves a daily choice, not just of His lifestyle, but of His presence in the heart by the Holy Spirit. When we choose to believe in Him, we permit Him to live out His life through us (Galatians 2:20). Choosing Christ involves accepting the gift of His righteousness by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-10), and this indwelling power is then the source of our peace of mind and our capacity to do works acceptable to God (see Romans 6:17-22). True faith in Christ is His gift to us when we choose to believe in Him. (See Luke 17:5).

Relevance: When you choose Christ as your Savior and Lord, inviting Him to live in your heart, He will give you a deeper love for Him, and you will have the grace to consecrate all to Him. Your daily choice to trust in Christ for the power to walk in His way is the secret of surrendering yourself to Him. He convicts, you choose, He empowers! His victory becomes yours because His powerful presence is in control of your life.

Have you chosen today to allow Christ to live in your heart? Will you choose Him again tomorrow, and every day thereafter?

#### Review Questions

1. True or False
  - a. Only genuine love for Christ is sufficient motivation for total consecration to Him
  - b. We can surrender all to God only as we choose Christ and allow Him to work through us.
  - c. Living a good life is a matter of developing the natural goodness of our minds
  - d. God never expects His children to give up everything for Him

2. Discuss: Why would Christ ever ask anyone to give up everything for Him? Doesn't He want us to be happy? How could we ever be happy giving up our homes and loved ones, or denying ourselves things that we really enjoy? Was it unfair of Jesus to ask the rich young ruler to sell all his property and give the money to the poor?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, Chapter 5.