

True Consecration

by Miles J. Stanford

True consecration is based on identification with Christ, and it involves understanding our position in the risen Lord Jesus Christ and yielding ourselves to God.

Duration: 47:55

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 4:9, Hebrews 6:1

Topics: "Consecration"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of personal work and leading others to Jesus. He emphasizes the need for careful discernment to ensure that individuals are ready for spiritual growth. The speaker also highlights the tragedy of churches relying on external speakers for occasional special meetings, instead of fostering consistent growth within the congregation. The sermon then delves into the topic of consecration in relation to discipleship, emphasizing the progression and development of a believer's journey towards true consecration. The key verse in Romans 6:13 is highlighted as the foundation for understanding and practicing consecration.

Transcript

Now, in our seventh session together of our series in God's Purpose, we have to deal with consecration in relation to discipleship. The consecrated believer, very, very important area in one's life. If you've ever read much of Andrew Murray, you probably have, you have noticed that his attitude is, every subject that he's dealing with in every book and in any number of places in each book, he claims that that specific area is the most important of all in a Christian's development and his growth.

Each subject that he deals with is the most important one. And in a way he's perfectly correct to have that attitude because every realm of our development is all-important. Each one must be entered into correctly on the basis of the truth and the correct doctrine.

And each area has its place in our development. And all the other areas are affected by each one. They are all synchronized, they're all geared together.

And the Holy Spirit alone can lead us into our healthy development. And as we approach this subject of consecration, it's very, very important to have this straight in our thinking and to know where we stand as far as being consecrated believers. And in this matter there are a number of foundational points that we must touch on.

One is that the believer is never brought into a healthy spiritual maturity by means of pressure, by being pushed or dragged, by being exhorted to make progress and to grow. And he'll never come into any semblance of spiritual maturity before he is prepared for it by the Holy Spirit. And the way the Holy Spirit prepares the Christian is through everyday life and through his study of the Word, these two factors.

And the preparation is governed by God, which includes, of course, Romans 8, 28 and 29, of all things working together to this end, to this purpose, that we might be conformed to the image of his Son. Our spiritual maturity is governed by all the things that he takes us through and all the things that he shows us in the Word as we study. Also, another point is that healthy progress is based upon our apprehension and understanding and appropriation of the truths in the Lord Jesus Christ that make for real growth.

That as we come to know him better and trust him more fully, there is naturally going to be healthy progress. We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. And as we study the Word and get to know the living Word, the Lord Jesus, the result will be healthy growth.

But there is no healthy growth apart from this. Another point is that the deeper, so-called deeper truths, the identification truths, are closed. They are actually a closed subject to all but the prepared, the needy, the hungry heart.

The Lord does not share these truths easily. There is too much to them and they mean too much. They are far too important to be entered into lightly or for personal benefit, etc.

The heart has to be prepared. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. There has to be that hunger and that thirst and that appreciation and that realized need before the truths of the cross and the identification truths begin to open up to the believer.

And until the Christian does become hungry, until he begins to realize something of his need, his progress is... There is not much progress for him. He remains a babe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He remains pretty close to the point of his birth, which, incidentally, is where most of our believers are today in our churches.

Babes in Christ, actually. And until the Christian becomes aware of self and begins to see his need, he pretty much stands still in spiritual development. We think of Hebrews 6.1. Therefore, leaving the elementary instruction about the Lord Jesus Christ, let us advance to mature manhood and not be continually relaying a foundation of repentance from lifeless works and of faith in God.

And the writer of the Hebrews, most likely Paul, suggests that the Christian go beyond the basic elementary truth of justification and not to be continually going about in a circle at that point, but to press on, that we might be in hunger for God's very best, and to face up to our need, to realize our need, which, of course, is the groundwork for advancement. And another point is that the Christian who has been brought to a point of decision to be saved by pressure, that has been talked into something, he has a very poor beginning, and it's not too likely that he will develop and mature because of this poor beginning. And that those who do personal work and seek to lead others to the Lord Jesus must be very careful and must make sure that the individual is ready.

Another area where we have a lot of tragedy is not only with an individual, the individuals, but with entire congregations, entire churches, where, for instance, the routine is maintained year in, year out, where an outside speaker is brought in once or twice a year for a week or two of special meetings. And the usual

routine here is pressure, where someone comes in and seeks to get the church moving, seeks to get the Christians going, seeks to get them witnessing, seeks to get them to grow. And there is a series of messages and much exhortation, and usually the meetings are brought to a focus at the end of the week, where everyone is expected to make a decision about being a better Christian or setting things right with God and with his neighbor, other church members.

And a reconsecration, for instance, and a determination to go out and win souls. All of this pressure that is applied very, very hard on a church, very hard on Christians, does far more damage than good as a rule through the years. And so often the challenge is thrown out that, well, God, the Lord Jesus gave his all for you, now the least you can do is to give your all for him.

And one is exhorted to show one's love for him by living for him and working for him. And there is much reliance upon the love motive, where, well, if you really love him, you'll live for him. And that type of attitude.

But actually the love motive is not a sound basis for Christian walk and Christian service, shocking as that might seem. Murray wrote that a superficial acquaintance with God's plan leads to the view that while justification is God's work by faith in Christ, sanctification or growth is our work to be performed under the influence of the gratitude we feel for the deliverance we have experienced, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit. But the earnest Christian soon finds how little gratitude can supply the power.

When he thinks that more prayer will supply it, he finds that indispensable as prayer is, it is not enough. Often the believer struggles hopelessly for years until he listens to the teachings of the Spirit as he glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ again and reveals Christ, our sanctification, to be appropriated by faith alone. No, the love motive is not sufficient for, to maintain a Christian walk and fruitful Christian service at all.

Murray also says that God works to will and he is ready to work to do. But alas, many Christians misunderstand this. They think because they have the will it is enough and that now they are able to do.

This is not so. The new will is a permanent gift, an attribute of the new nature. The power to do is not a permanent gift, but must be each moment received from the Holy Spirit as a branch receiving from the vine.

It is the man who is conscious of his own helplessness as a believer who will learn that by the Holy Spirit he can lead a holy life. And there we are brought back to our abiding in the Lord Jesus. And we will not really abide in Him until there are two factors that we are aware of.

One, that we cannot live a Christian life in our own strength. We cannot serve Him acceptably by our own doing. And two, that we have been placed in the Lord Jesus Christ and that He is our life and there is a union there of life.

The Lord Jesus and the Christian are one, a oneness of nature, and that He stands ready to live His life in and through the Christian. When the Christian ceases from his own efforts and struggle, when the Christian abides in Him, rests in Him, and allows Him to be and do. And this adds up to the proper motive and motivation for the Christian life.

And that is the life motive. The love motive is inadequate. Certainly love is important.

Certainly love is powerful. But love is not the motivation for the Christian life. Life is the motivation for the Christian life.

Christ, who is our life. For it is God that worketh in you, both the will and to do of His good pleasure, and it's the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in and through the Christian. That's the Christian life.

For to me to live is Christ. Not I, but Christ. And now we come closer to our subject of consecration.

And here is the common error in this realm. Metcalfe sets it forth very clearly. He writes that the modern teaching of consecration which is tantamount to the consecration of the old man seeks to bypass the death sentence and therefore only leads to frustration and failure.

When, however, you and I are prepared in simple humility to make the fact of our death with Christ our daily basis of life and service, there is nothing that can prevent the uprising and outflow of new life and meet the need of thirsty souls around us. And this is what happens in our youth meetings and in our camp meetings and in our conferences, weekend conferences and all, retreats so often that a group is together and they hear a series of messages and they're exhorted to consecrate themselves or re-consecrate themselves to God. And it often happens, of course, in chapel meetings and Bible schools and Bible colleges, this excitation for consecration and re-consecration.

And, of course, in the holiness circles this goes on almost every meeting. And, of course, in these churches there are meetings probably five nights out of the week. At least you have to keep these folks going somewhere or another.

And there's this constant circle of consecration and re-consecration, a terrible rut in which to be. And all because the Christian is actually seeking to present his self, present self, his life, his old life to God. And, of course, God cannot accept that life in the first place.

And so the Christian finds that it doesn't work and that there's no reality and there's no result from his consecration and he's frustrated and he seeks to do it over again. He doesn't feel that God has accepted him. And there's a pathetic situation to be in.

Some Christians go on this way for years, wondering what's the matter. And feeling maybe they're not worthy and God can't accept them. All these many things that come up simply because they do not understand the truth of consecration.

And many Christians are taken over to Romans 12.1, which is supposed to be the consecration verse where Paul says, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Well, this may have a lot to do with consecration, but it is not the key. It is not the basis of consecration.

We cannot skip from Romans 3, our justification, the first part of Romans, our birth truths. We cannot be taken all the way from there, clear over to Romans 12, and expect to be able to consecrate ourselves on the basis of just being saved. No.

There is a development and a progression to the point of consecration. And, of course, Romans 6 enters into the picture far, far before Romans 12. And few believers seem to realize that the key verse, the key truth, the key principle of true consecration, true rest in the Lord Jesus Christ, is set forth in the very center of Romans 6, the very center of the area that sets forth the identification truth.

And, of course, true consecration is based upon identification, and there is no other basis for it. And if we think of Romans 6.13, we can see here what God means by consecration. Romans 6.13. Yield yourselves unto God.

How? As those that are alive from the dead. In order to truly be consecrated, the Christian has to see his position in the risen Lord Jesus Christ. He has to see that he is dead and that his life is hid with Christ in God.

He has to be familiar with the identification truth. He has to see his position in the Lord Jesus in relation to the cross, dead unto sin and alive unto God. He has to see that, understand that, and be resting in that truth before he can be truly consecrated.

Because God says that he is to yield himself to him as one that is alive from the dead. We have to realize that we are in the risen Lord Jesus Christ. We have been brought up out of death, the death of Calvary, which we shared with the Lord Jesus at that time.

And it could not be otherwise because our Father can accept no life other than that of his Son, his beloved Son. And the only reason God is able to accept the Christian is because the Christian is in the Lord Jesus Christ and that the Lord Jesus is his life. That is the basis upon which God is able to accept us and acknowledge us.

So that we have to realize our position in him and present ourselves to God on that foundation, on that basis. Well, Father, I see that I am alive in the Lord Jesus Christ, that I am hid in the Lord Jesus Christ and at your right hand in him. I am seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

And I present myself to thee upon that basis, that the Lord Jesus is my life. He is my only... He is what I have to offer. I do not offer myself my old life, but I come in him.

I stand before thee in him. I bow before thee in him. And when this is our attitude, when we realize this and see this and enter into this in attitude, then we are consecrated Christians.

A consecration is simply an acknowledgement of what is already true of us. But, of course, we have to see that truth before we can acknowledge it. A consecration is rest.

A consecrated Christian is a resting Christian, an abiding Christian. A consecration doesn't confer ownership. We are not giving ourselves to God.

We are simply acknowledging that we already belong to God. A consecration does not confer ownership. It presumes it.

We don't consecrate ourselves to God in order to be his, but we simply yield ourselves to him because we are his. We simply take the attitude of a branch because we see that we're already in the vine. We abide because we see where we are.

Abiding isn't getting into the vine. Abiding is acknowledging that we're already in the vine. We've been placed in the vine of God, i.e., in Christ Jesus.

God has the title of our lives because we were purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's already in full ownership. And consecration simply amounts to delivery, yielding, that which already belongs to him.

So the question is not, do I belong to Christ, but have I yielded to the Lord Jesus, that which already belongs to him? The same principle as abiding. And that's why it's important that we learn to abide because we can't really learn about consecration until we've learned how to abide. We can't see the truth of consecration until we see our position.

We can't present ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead until we know that we are alive from the dead, until we know that we are alive in the Lord Jesus Christ risen. So here we come again to the knowledge of the facts, the truth and the doctrine and the principles, that the Christian who knows where he stands is a Christian who can respond to these different areas that are set before him. To consecrate himself, for instance, he has to know the basis for consecration.

We think of Hebrews 4, verse 9. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from his. Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest.

Well, we can consider consecration as rest. That's why when a Christian consecrates the old life, and of course God can accept that, consecrates himself, that there's no rest, there's no peace, there's no fulfillment there, because he's going at it in the wrong way. And until he knows the facts, there will be no rest.

And coming to know the facts, of our position in the Lord Jesus Christ, involves labor. Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest. It's not a labor of a struggle to get into our position.

It's not even a labor or struggle to consecrate oneself. The only time there's labor in consecration is when one does not know the facts, when one is seeking to be acceptable to God, or seeking to submit to God. There's where there is struggle and labor, yes, but actual, true consecration does not involve any struggle or labor. The labor comes long before the time for consecration, and the labor that is involved is the labor of finding out the facts, the study, and what the Lord takes us through in order to prepare us to see what we have in the Lord Jesus and what we don't have in ourselves through failure.

There is where the labor is involved. Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest. And once we find out the facts and see our position through all that He takes us through and from our study, then we simply abide.

Then we simply rest. Then we simply realize that there's nothing else to do but to effortlessly yield ourselves to Him, and we're consecrated. The groundwork must be laid in preparation.

The actual consecration is effortless. Why should it be hard to simply rest in His wonderful hands, in His nail-pierced hands, pierced for us? Why should there be any labor there? The labor comes in realizing that those hands are trustworthy, and knowing that for a fact, and that we cannot produce in ourselves, then is the time for quiet rest. We think of Isaiah 30, 15.

In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. And there's no strength in the Christian life without quietness, without his being sure of his position in the Lord Jesus, without being sure that he's secure in Him. There can be no confidence in the Lord Jesus until we really know Him.

You can't place confidence in one you're not sure of, and you shouldn't. And the Christian is weak, and he's up and down day by day. His life fluctuates, and he's not dependable until he enters into the rest and abides in the vine.

There is where the strength is. In quietness and confidence shall be his strength. The strong Christian is a resting Christian, because then the Lord Jesus is his stay, his anchor, his abiding place, his hiding place, his strong tower.

And he's strong in Christ, in himself. He has the Lord Jesus strength. He has the Lord Jesus confidence.

He has the Lord Jesus quietness. And he's a stable, dependable believer, simply because he's hiding in the Lord Jesus. And another thing that makes consecration sometimes difficult is the fact that when the Christian is truly consecrated, he's simply brought into the position for further development, further growth.

He's on better ground for further growth, further maturing. And of course, the principle of growth involves the cross. It involves growth.

It involves being taken down. So many who consecrate themselves feel that now everything's going to be fine and the Lord is going to use me. And I'm going to just simply blossom.

Because now I'm consecrated. Now I've arrived. Whereas, of course, it is for this exact further development.

The branch, the consecrated branch, the branch that is abiding, the branch that is resting, the prune. And he prunes it. The branch that it might bring forth more fruit and vines.

And the pruning, of course, has to do with the old life where the quality cuts into the old life and realizes the risk was still. He can reflect on that because he's a consecrated Christian who always sees anything that would be frightful. Has come to that place on the basis of feeding his life, feeding the old life.

He's found all by this time that the old life is something to be shunned, something to be turned from, something that his life, hating the old life, he's found out by this time that the old life is something to be shunned, something to be turned from, something that we must allow the Holy Spirit to crucify and hold in the place of death. And then in the process of, the result of consecration, the pruning, the only area that is pruned and dealt with and cut is the area of the old life, certainly not the new life. The life of the Lord Jesus doesn't need any pruning or any trimming.

And if a Christian has come to hate his own old life through failure and through seeing himself for what it is, he can rejoice in the pruning. He's not going to be afraid that everything's gone wrong and he's being mistreated. No.

He realizes that the life that must be dealt with is being dealt with. And he can rejoice in the midst of his processing. And it's the same with the picture of the Christian being a corn of wheat.

That the consecrated Christian, the Christian who has turned himself fully over to the Lord Jesus' hands is going to be buried. He's going to be sown so that there might be a harvest. And this, of course, involves daily death, hardship, suffering, misunderstanding, all of these different things that have to do with the cross.

But this is the method, of course, that brings forth a harvester. Except the corn of wheat falling to the ground and dying at a bite of the loam. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.

And this is the result of a consecrated heart, consecrated life, that is going to be simply taken deeper into this processing. Because God has a goal for each one of us, and that is that we might be conformed to the

image of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And as far as service is concerned, God is preparing each consecrated believer for a specific service.

It doesn't necessarily have to be formal ministry or foreign mission, or anything. It doesn't necessarily have to be that, to be in his service. Every Christian should be in the service of the Lord in one realm or another, whichever he has for them.

I think the finest and most important service today, far beyond pastor or even missionary, I feel is the mother in the Christian home, the Christian mother in the Christian home, to raise a family and take care of her husband. I don't think there is a more important ministry than that today. God honors the home.

God wants the Christian home. And if the entire home is not Christian and the mother is Christian, that's the basis upon which he works. And for a mother to raise her children in the fear and the nurture of the Lord faithfully, and for a mother to be faithful to her husband and to help him, be a real helpmeet to him, if he's unsaved, to be faithful in her witness to him and her patience with him and her care of him and to bring him, to win him, not drive him, but win him to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no ministry like this that I know of. There is no more important ministry. I remember in Wheaton, I at one time had a Bible class consisting of wives of seminary students at Wheaton, probably 30 of them, most of them mothers, young mothers.

And we talked along this line at one time, and a number of these mothers were, well, you know, they're seeking to help put their husband to a seminary. They have one, two or three children sometimes, and it's extremely difficult in every way, financially and physically and mentally and spiritually to carry on in this way until the husband is out of school and established. And a number of them were, most of them were college grads themselves, and they felt so frustrated.

And if they could only get into the Lord's work, they were here, they were tied to this sink and their diapers and their late hours and all that's involved, felt that they were completely out of it. And their husbands were studying and advancing in their preparation for the ministry or the mission field or whatever it was. And we had to help them to see that they were in the key position as a mother.

Oh, what a privilege. What a position to be in. As a branch and as a seed that God would prepare them and to deal with them and to make them a better Christian mother.

The finest ministry of all. And another, a number of them saw this, and I noticed a great difference in their attitudes from then on during the meetings, that they seemed to quiet down and settle down to what, where God had placed them. And they began to rejoice in the privilege.

A complete turnabout of attitude. How important. Because God is dealing with a consecrated Christian not only for his growth and development, but he's dealing with him for service.

He's fashioning him for a specific work, whether it's a mother or a husband or a pastor or a missionary, whatever it might be. He has that work all laid out, and he fashions his instrument. So this is going on in all this process.

In the shadow of his hand has he hid me and made me a polished shaft. In his quiver has he hid me. And the Christian is not only a branch, he's not only a seed, but he's an arrow or he's a spear, he's a polished shaft to be used by God at his discretion and in any way he wishes.

And it may involve being hidden in his quiver for many a year, waiting for that thrust of God that will be effective and bring forth fruit. So it's obvious that a consecrated Christian first has to be prepared. He first has to know the facts before he can enter into this realm and rest there and to realize what's going on and to not struggle and not seek to push away God's hand and not seek to do it himself or do it his way, the way he wants it.

No, but to rest, to be consecrated, to be confident in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. That type of Christian, that's the only consecration there is where we realize that the life of the Lord Jesus is being developed in us so that we're really consecrating the new life. We're just saying, well, Lord Jesus, I just leave my Christian life, my new life in thy hands.

I realize that thou art the one that works in me both to will and to do of thy good pleasure. Thou art the source of my life. The Lord Jesus is the true vine of my life and I can afford to rest and rely upon him.

It won't make me inactive. It won't make me, leave me out of the picture because he's my very life. There is a union there of nature and I'm activated more than ever.

But the source and motivation comes from his life. I don't have to produce the strength and produce all the necessities from my own tainted, inadequate resources of the old life. Never.

Sinful resources. Never. But simply to abide in him and he will perform.

He will do. He will be because he's my life. And we have to say it again.

This all takes time. This all takes years. And this is where so often the re-consecration comes into the picture that a Christian may have consecrated himself and nothing seems to happen.

Or everything seems to happen negatively and downwards. And he doesn't seem to be gaining his crown. There's a cross in the way here where he doesn't realize that the cross comes before the crown.

And there's so much time involved and so little seeming progress made that the temptation is for the Christian to seek to re-consecrate himself. And maybe he didn't mean business. Maybe God didn't accept his consecration.

And all of these all this frustrating circle that the Christian gets into because he doesn't realize the time involved and all that God has to do. And he's not able to rest and wait because he's not sure. It all comes from a lack of knowledge.

A lack of seeing the facts. That his life now is the Lord Jesus. And the Father is sovereign and he knows what he's doing and he has his plan all made out.

He has his purpose in mind. And the Christian can afford to give him a free hand and he can afford to wait. And for the Christian to wait upon God it may take years.

But the result of those years will get much more accomplished in a very brief time than as though the Christian tried to be busy all those years and tried to produce much more. And God never wastes any time. How important this principle of time is that God is not in a hurry and he doesn't have to be in a hurry to accomplish his eternal work.

God could have created the universe in an instant and the world and but he did take six days. He doesn't he doesn't hurry. And he hasn't the Lord Jesus hasn't returned yet and it's been thousands of years.

God a day with God is as a thousand years and yet a thousand years with God is as a day. God is working in and from eternity. And it's good for us to have that attitude the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ to see things from God's viewpoint.

Well, we can't do that until we get to know God and to look at things through his eyes. Then there's rest then there's peace then there's quietness then there's confidence then there's strength then there's stability then there is consistent testimony in this matter of consecration once the Christian really begins to abide which is the same as consecration actually. All things are working together for God's purpose every day all day everything and the the results may not seem to be forthcoming but they're all working deep within the Christian's life far below the realm of consciousness in his spirit not in his soul necessarily but deep in his spirit and finally things begin to fit together very swiftly and there is establishment but it comes as a result of years of accumulation and dealing while the Christian rests and waits and trusts.

I remember a crude illustration would be I used to be a ball player in pitching and I played on this same team for many years and I did fairly well but I was learning and we didn't have a really efficient coaching we learned by doing we learned by failing but I remember years and years of this constant experience and learning where one day one day all this seemed to fall in place and fit together and I knew what I was doing I was able to produce and it was a complete change of attitude in my ball playing a confidence and a rest and a strength and an ability that came from the accumulation and the waiting of the years previous and it's the same with the Christian walk and Christian service this development deep within and it finally begins to come forth as we wait and as we look to him and as we rest in him all based upon the facts all based upon our realization of the truth so we still are brought back to that word study study our Father we do wait upon thee we wait upon thee in confidence which is the only waiting that can mean anything when we wait upon thee one must be confident in thee because thou art trustworthy thou art able so we wait upon thee patiently as thou dost deal deep within our hearts faithfully we look unto the Lord Jesus and we abide in him knowing so well that he which hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the very day of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and on into eternity and we do thank thee for this Father in Jesus name Amen.

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