

The Christian Urged to an Express Act of Self-Dedication to the Service of God

by Philip Doddridge

Philip Doddridge urges Christians to make a deliberate and solemn self-dedication to God's service, emphasizing the importance of cheerfulness and commitment in this act.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 26:17, Ecclesiastes 5:2, Luke 18:13, Romans 6:13, Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Ephesians 2:19, 2 Timothy 1:12, 1 Peter 5:2

Topics: "Surrender To God", "Christian Dedication"

Description

Philip Doddridge preaches about the importance of making a solemn surrender of oneself to God, urging believers to declare their dedication in the divine presence with deliberate, cheerful, entire, perpetual, and solemn expressions. The surrender should encompass all aspects of life, including time, possessions, influence, and desires, with a heartfelt desire to be entirely God's. Doddridge emphasizes the need for a written instrument of dedication, signed and declared before God in a season of extraordinary devotion, to serve as a reminder and anchor in times of temptation and affliction.

Transcript

1. The advantages of such a surrender are briefly suggested.-- 2, 3, 4. Advice for the manner of doing it; that it be deliberate, cheerful, entire, perpetual.--5. And that it be expressed with some affecting solemnity.--6. A written instrument to be signed and declared before God, at some season of extraordinary devotion, reposed. The chapter concludes with a specimen of such an instrument, together with an abstract of it, to be used with proper and requisite alterations.

1. AS I would hope, that, notwithstanding all the forms of opposition which do or may arise, yet in consideration of those noble supports and motives which have been mentioned in the two preceding chapters, you are heartily determined for the service of God, I would now urge you to make a solemn surrender of yourself unto it. Do not only form such a purpose in your heart, but expressly declare it in the divine presence. Such solemnity in the manner of doing it is certainly very reasonable in the nature of things; and surely it is highly expedient for binding to the Lord such a treacherous heart as we know our own to be.

It will be pleasant to reflect upon it, as done at such and such a time, with such and such circumstances of place and method, which may serve to strike the memory and the conscience. The sense of the vows of

God which are upon you, will strengthen you in an hour of temptation; and the recollection may also encourage your humble boldness and freedom in applying to him, under the character and relation of your Covenant God and Father, as future exigencies may require. 2. Do it therefore; but do it deliberately.

Consider what it is that you are to do, and consider how reasonable it is that it should be done, and done cordially and cheerfully; "not by constraint, but willingly," (1 Pet. 5:2) for in this sense, and in every other, "God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7) Now surely there is nothing we should do with greater cheerfulness or more cordial consent, than making such a surrender of ourselves to this Lord, to the God who created us, who brought us into this pleasant and well-furnished world, who supported us in our tender infancy, who guarded us in the thoughtless days of childhood and youth, who has hitherto continually helped, sustained, and preserved us.

Nothing can be more reasonable than that we should acknowledge him as our rightful owner and our Sovereign Ruler; than that we should devote ourselves to him as our most gracious Benefactor, and seek him as our supreme felicity. Nothing can be more apparently equitable than that we, the product of his power, and the price of his Son's blood, should be his, and his for ever. If you see the matter in its just view, it will be the grief of your soul that you have ever alienated yourself from the blessed God and his service: so far will you be from wishing to continue in that state of alienation another year, or another day, you will rejoice to bring back to him his revolted creature; and as you have in times past "yielded your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," you will delight to "yield yourselves unto God as alive from the dead," and to employ "your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." (Rom. 6:13) 3.

The surrender will also be as entire as it is cheerful and immediate. All you are, and all you have, and all you can do, your time, your possessions, your influence over others, will be devoted to him, that for the future it may be employed entirely for him, and to his glory. You will desire to keep back nothing from him; but will seriously judge that you are then in the truest and noblest sense your own, when you are most entirely his. You are also, on this great occasion, to resign all that you have to the disposal of his wise and gracious providence; not only owning his power, but consenting to his undoubted right to do what he pleases with you, and all that he has given you; and declaring a hearty approbation of all that he has done, and of all that he may farther do. 4.

Once more, let me remind you that this surrender must be perpetual. You must give yourself up to God in such a manner as never more to pretend to be your own; for the rights of God are, like his nature, eternal and immutable; and with regard to his rational creatures, are the same yesterday, today, and for ever. 5. I would farther advise and urge that this dedication may be made with all possible solemnity. Do it in express words. And perhaps it may be in many cases most expedient, as many pious divines have recommended, to do it in writing.

Set your hand and seal to it, "that on such a day of such a month and year, and at such a place, on full consideration and serious reflection, you came to this happy resolution, that, whatsoever others might do, you would serve the Lord." (Josh. 24:15) 6. Such an instrument you may, if you please draw up for yourself; or, if you rather choose to have it drawn up to your hand, you may find something of this nature below, in which you may easily make such alterations as shall suit your circumstances, where there is any thing peculiar in them.

But whatever you use, weigh it well, meditate attentively upon it, that you may "not be rash with your mouth to utter any thing before God." (Eccel. 5:2) And when you determine to execute this instrument, let the transaction be attended with some more than ordinary; religious retirement. Make it, if you conveniently can, a day of secret fasting and prayer; and when your heart is prepared with a becoming awe of the Divine Majesty, with an humble confidence in his goodness, and an earnest desire of his favor, then present yourself on your knees before God, and read it over deliberately and solemnly; and when you have signed it, lay it by in some secure place, where you may review it whenever you please; and make it a rule with yourself to review it, if possible, at certain seasons of the year, that you may keep up the remembrance of it.

And God grant that you may be enabled to keep it, and in the whole of your conversation to walk according to it. May it be an anchor to your soul in every temptation, and a cordial to it in every affliction. May the recollection of it embolden your addresses to the throne of grace now, and give additional strength to your departing spirit, in a consciousness that it is ascending to your covenant God and Father, and to that gracious Redeemer, whose power and faithfulness will securely "keep what you commit to him unto that day." (2 Tim. 1:12)

An Example of Self-Dedication.

"Eternal and unchangeable Jehovah! thou great Creator of heaven and earth, and adorable Lord of angels and men, I desire, with the deepest humiliation and abasement of soul, to fall down at this time in thine awful presence, and earnestly pray that thou wilt penetrate 'my heart with a suitable sense of thine unutterable and inconceivable glories. "Trembling may justly take bold upon me, (Job 20:6) when I, a sinful worm, presume to lift up my head to thee, presume to appear in thy majestic presence on such an occasion as this.

Who am I, O Lord God! or what is my house? What is my nature or descent, my character and desert, that I should thus address the King of kings, and Lord of lords! I blush and am confounded before thee. But, O Lord! great as is thy majesty, so also is thy mercy. If thou wilt hold converse with any of thy creatures, thy superlatively exalted nature must stoop, must stoop infinitely low. And I know, that in and through Jesus, the Son of thy love, thou condescendest to visit sinful mortals, and to allow their approach to thee, and their covenant intercourse with thee; nay, I know that the scheme and plan is thine own, and that thou hast graciously sent to propose it to us; as none untaught by thee would have been able to form it, or inclined to embrace it, even when actually proposed.

"To thee therefore do I now come, invited by the name of thy Son, and trusting in his righteousness and grace. Laying myself at thy feet, 'with shame and confusion of face,' and 'smiting, upon my breast,' I say, with the humble publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' (Luke 18:13) I acknowledge, O Lord! that I have been a great transgressor. 'My sins have reached unto heaven,' (Rev. 18:5) and 'my iniquities are lifted up unto the skies.' (Jer. 51:9) The irregular propensities of my corrupted and degenerated nature have, in ten thousand aggravated instances, 'wrought to bring forth fruit unto death.' (Rom. 8:5) And if thou shouldst be strict to mark my offences, I must be silent under a load of guilt, and immediately sink into destruction.

But thou hast graciously healed me to return unto thee, though I have been a wandering sheep, a prodigal son, a backsliding child. (Jer. 3:22) Behold, therefore, O Lord! I come unto thee. I come, convinced not only of my sin, but of my folly. I come, from my very heart ashamed of myself, and with an

acknowledgment, in the sincerity and humility of my soul, that 'I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.' (1 Sam. 26:21) I am confounded myself at the remembrance of these things; but be thou 'merciful to my unrighteousness, and do not remember against me my sins and my transgressions!' (Heb. 8:12) Permit me, O Lord, to bring back unto thee those powers and faculties which I have ungratefully and sacrilegiously alienated from thy service; and receive, I beseech thee, thy poor revolted creature, who is now convinced of thy right to him, and desires nothing in the whole world: so much as to be thine!

"Blessed God! it is with the utmost solemnity that I make this surrender of myself unto thee. 'Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! I avouch the Lord this day to be my God, (Deut. 26:17) and I avouch and declare myself this day to be one of his covenant children and people. Hear, O thou God of heaven! and record it in the book of thy remembrance,' (Matt. 3:16) that henceforth I am thine, entirely thine. I would not merely consecrate unto thee some of my powers, or some of my possessions, or give thee a certain proportion of my services, or all I am capable of for a limited time; but I would be wholly thine, and thine for ever.

From this day I would solemnly renounce all the 'former lords which have had dominion over me,' (Isai. 26:13) every sin and every lust; and bid, in thy name, an eternal defiance to the powers of hell, which have most unjustly usurped the empire over my soul, and to all the corruptions which their fatal temptations have introduced into it. The whole frame of my nature, all the faculties of my mind, and all the members of my body, would I present before thee this day, 'as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which' I know to be 'my most reasonable service.' (Rom. 12:1) To thee I consecrate all my worldly possessions: in thy service I desire to spend all the remainder of my time upon earth, and beg thou wouldst instruct and influence me, so that, whether my abode here be longer or shorter, every year and month, every day and hour, may be used in such a manner as shall most effectually promote thine honor, and subserve the designs of thy wise and gracious providence.

And I earnestly pray, that, whatever influence thou givest me over others, in any of the superior relations of life in which I may stand, or in consequence of any peculiar regard which may be paid to me, thou wouldst give me the strength and courage to exert myself to the utmost for thy glory; resolving not only that I will myself do it, but that all others, so far as I can rationally and properly influence them, 'shall serve the Lord' (Josh. 24:15) In this course, O blessed God! would I steadily persevere to the very end of life; earnestly praying, that every future day of it may supply the deficiencies and correct the irregularities of the former; and that I may, by divine grace, be enabled not only to hold on in that happy way, but daily to grow more active in it!

"Nor do I only consecrate all that I am and have to thy service, but I also most humbly resign, and submit to thy holy and sovereign will, myself, and all that I can call mine. I leave, O Lord! to thy management and direction, all I possess, and all I wish; and set every enjoyment and every interest before thee, to be disposed of as thou pleasest. Continue or remove what thou hast given me; bestow or refuse what I imagine I want, as thou, Lord, shalt see good! And though I dare not say I will never repine, yet I hope I may venture to say, that I will labor not only to submit, but to acquiesce; not only to bear what thou doest in thy most afflictive dispensations, but to consent to it, and to praise thee for it; contentedly resolving, in all thou appointest for me, my will into thine, and looking on myself as nothing, and on thee, O God! as the great eternal ALL, whose word ought to determine every thing, and whose government ought to be the joy of the whole rational creation.

"Use me, O Lord! I beseech thee, as the instrument of thy glory; and honor me so far, as, either by doing or suffering what thou shalt appoint, to bring some revenue of praise to thee, and of benefit to the world in which I dwell! And may it please thee, from this day forward, to number me among thy peculiar people! that I may `no more be a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God!' (Eph. 2:19) Receive, O heavenly Father! thy returning prodigal!

Wash me in the blood of thy dear Son; clothe me with his perfect righteousness; and sanctify me throughout by the power of thy Spirit! Destroy, I beseech thee, more and more the power of sin in my heart! Transform me more into thine own image, and fashion me to the resemblance of Jesus, whom henceforward I would acknowledge as my teacher and sacrifice, my intercessor and my Lord! Communicate to me, I beseech thee, all needful influences of thy purifying. thy cheering, and thy comforting Spirit!

And lift up that 'light of thy countenance upon me,' which will put the sublimest joy and `gladness into my soul.' (Psa. 4:6,7) "Dispose my affairs, O God! in a manner which may be most subservient to thy glory and my own truest happiness; and when I have done and borne thy will upon earth, call me from hence at what time and in what manner thou pleasest: only grant, that in my dying moments, and in the near prospect of eternity, I may remember these my engagements to thee, and may employ my latest breath in thy service.

And do thou, Lord, when thou seest the agonies of dissolving nature upon me, remember this covenant too, even though I should then be incapable of recollecting it. Look down, O my heavenly Father! with a pitying eye, upon thy languishing, thy dying child; place thine everlasting arms underneath me for my support; put strength and confidence into my departing spirit, and receive it to the embraces of thine everlasting love. Welcome it to the abodes of them that sleep in Jesus, (1 Thess. 4:14) to wait with them that glorious day, when the last of thy promises to thy covenant people shall be fulfilled in their triumphant resurrection, and in that abundant entrance which shall be administered to them into that everlasting kingdom, (2 Pet. 1:12) of which thou hast assured them by thy covenant, and in the hope of which I now lay hold of it, desiring to live and to die, as. with mine hand on that hope.

"And when I am thus numbered among the dead, and all the interests of mortality are over with me for ever, if this solemn memorial should chance to fall into the hands of my surviving friends, may it be the means of making serious impression on their minds. May they read it, not only as my language, but as their own; and learn to fear the Lord my God, and with me, to put their trust under the shadow of his wing for time and for eternity! And may they also learn to adore with me that grace which inclines our hearts to enter into the covenant, and condescends to admit us into it when so inclined; ascribing, with me, and with all the nations of the redeemed, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that glory, honor, and praise, which is so justly due to each divine person for the part he bears " in this illustrious work. Amen.

N.B. For the sake of those who may think the preceding Form of Self-Dedication too long to be transcribed, as it is possible many will, I have, at the desire of a much esteemed friend, added the following Abridgment of it, which should, by all means, be attentively weighed in every clause before it is executed; and any word or phrase which may seem liable to exception, changed, that the whole heart may consent to it all.

"Eternal and ever-blessed God! I desire to present myself before thee, with the deepest humiliation and abasement of soul, sensible how unworthy such a sinful worm is to appear before the holy Majesty of

heaven, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and especially on such an occasion as this, ever to dedicate myself, without reserve, to thee. But the scheme and plan is thine own. Thine infinite condescension hath offered it by thy Son, and thy grace hath inclined my heart to accept of it.

"I come, therefore, acknowledging myself to have been a great offender; smiting upon my breast, and saying with the humble publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' I come, invited by the name of thy Son, and wholly trusting in his perfect righteousness, entreating that for his sake thou wilt be merciful to my unrighteousness, and wilt no more remember my sins. Receive, I beseech thee, thy revolted creature, who is now convinced of thy right to him, and desires nothing so much as that he may be thine "This day do I, with the utmost solemnity, surrender myself to thee.

I renounce all former lords that have had dominion over me; and I consecrate to thee all that I am, and all that I have; the faculties of my mind, the members of my body, my worldly possessions, my time, and my influence over others; to be all used entirely for thy glory, and resolutely employed in obedience to thy commands, as long as thou continuest me in life; with an ardent desire and humble resolution to continue thine through all the endless ages of eternity; ever holding myself in an attentive posture to observe the first intimations of thy will, and ready to spring forward with zeal and joy to the immediate execution of it.

"To thy direction also I resign myself, and all I am and have, to be disposed of by thee in such a manner as thou shalt in thine infinite wisdom judge most subservient to the purposes of thy glory. To thee I leave the management of all events, and say without reserve, 'Not my will, but thine be done,' rejoicing with a loyal heart in thine unlimited government, as what ought to be the delight of the whole rational creation. "Use me, O Lord, I beseech thee, as an instrument of thy service! number me among thy peculiar people!

Let me be washed in the blood of thy dear Son! Let me be clothed with his righteousness!. Let me be sanctified by his Spirit! Transform me more and more into his image! Impart to me through him, all needful influences of thy purifying, cheering, and comforting Spirit! And let my life be spent under those influences, and in the light of thy gracious countenance, as my Father and my God! "And when the solemn hour of death comes, may I remember thy covenant, 'well ordered in all things and sure, as all my salvation and all my desire,' (2 Sam. 23:5) though every hope and enjoyment is perishing; and do thou, O Lord! remember it too.

Look down with pity, O my heavenly Father, on thy languishing, dying child! Embrace me in thine everlasting arms! Put strength and confidence into my departing spirit, and receive it to the abodes of them that sleep in Jesus, peacefully and joyfully to wait the accomplishment of thy great promise to all thy people, even that of a glorious resurrection, and of eternal happiness in thine heavenly presence! "And if any surviving friend should, when I am in the dust, meet with this memorial of my solemn transactions with thee, may he make the engagement his own; and do thou graciously admit him to partake in all the blessings of thy covenant, through Jesus the great Mediator of it; to whom, with thee, O Father, and thy Holy Spirit, be ever-lasting praises ascribed, by all the millions who are thus saved by thee, and by all those other celestial spirits in whose work and blessedness thou shalt call them to share! Amen."

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