

The Path of Progress: Presenting Ourselves to God 7 the Eternal Purpose

by Watchman Nee

True consecration is being separated unto God, being set apart to Him exclusively, and surrendering oneself daily to His ownership and authority.

Scripture: Romans 6:12

Topics: "Consecration", "Holiness"

Description

Watchman Nee emphasizes the true nature of consecration in his sermon, focusing on the importance of presenting ourselves to God as living sacrifices, recognizing that our old selves have been crucified and we are now alive in Christ. He explains that true holiness comes from being set apart for God, not from eradicating evil within us, and that our lives should be viewed as belonging entirely to Him. Nee challenges believers to understand that presenting themselves to God means relinquishing ownership of their time, talents, and resources, and to be willing to follow God's will without reservations. He illustrates this with the example of a Chinese brother who recognized that his hands belonged to the Lord, highlighting the need for a complete transfer of ownership to God. Ultimately, Nee calls for a life of continual surrender and obedience to God's purpose, emphasizing that true consecration is about being wholly devoted to Him.

Transcript

Our study has now brought us to the point where we are able to consider the true nature of consecration. We have before us the second half of Romans 6 from verse 12 to the end. In Romans 6.12,13 we read: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof : neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness ; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The operative word here is "present" and this occurs five times, in verses 13, 16 and 19.*

Many have taken this word "present" to imply consecration without looking carefully into its content. Of course that is what it does mean, but not in the sense in which we so often understand it. It is not the consecration of our 'old man' with his instincts and resourcesour natural wisdom, strength and other gifts-to the Lord for Him to use.

* Note-Two Greek verbs paristano and paristemi are translated in these verses by 'present' in the R.V. where the A.V. has 'yield'. Paristemi occurs frequently with this meaning, e.g. in Rom. 12.1; 2 Cor. 11. 2 ;

Col. 1. 22, 28, and in Luke 2. 22 where it is used of the presenting of the infant Jesus to God in the Temple. Both words have an active sense for which the R.V. translation 'present' is greatly to be preferred. 'Yield ' contains a passive idea of 'surrender' that has coloured much evangelical thought but which is not in keeping with the context here in Romans-ED.

This will be at once clear from verse 13. Note there the clause " as alive from the dead ". Paul says: " Present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead ". This defines for us the point at which consecration begins. For what is here referred to is not the consecration of anything belonging to the old creation, but only of that which has passed through death to resurrection. The 'presenting' spoken of is the outcome of my knowing my old man to be crucified. Knowing, reckoning, presenting to God: that is the Divine order.

When I really know I am crucified with Him, then spontaneously I reckon myself dead (verses 6 and 11) ; and when I know that I am raised with Him from the dead, then likewise I reckon myself " alive unto God in Christ Jesus " (verses 9 and 11), for both the death and the resurrection side of the Cross are to be accepted by faith. When this point is reached, giving myself to Him follows. In resurrection He is the source of my life -indeed He is my life; so I cannot but present everything to Him, for all is His, not mine. But without passing through death I have nothing to consecrate, nor is there anything God can accept, for He has condemned all that is of the old creation to the Cross. Death has cut off all that cannot be consecrated to Him, and resurrection alone has made consecration possible. Presenting myself to God means that henceforth I consider my whole life as now belonging to the Lord.

THE THIRD STEP: " PRESENT YOURSELVES . . . "

Let us observe that this 'presenting' relates to the members of my body-that body which, as we saw earlier, is now unemployed in respect of sin. " Present yourselves ... and your members ", says Paul, and again: " Present your members " (Romans 6. 13, 15). God requires of me that I now regard all my members, all my faculties, as belonging wholly to Him.

It is a great thing when I discover I am no longer my own but His. If the ten shillings in my pocket belong to me, then I have full authority over them. But if they belong to another who has committed them to me in trust, then I cannot buy what I please with them, and I dare not lose them. Real Christian life begins with knowing this. How many of us know that, because Christ is risen, we are therefore alive " unto God " and not unto ourselves? How many of us dare not use our time or money or talents as we would, because we realise they are the Lord's, not ours? How many of us have such a strong sense that we belong to Another that we dare not squander a shilling of our money, or an hour of our time, or any of our mental or physical powers?

On one occasion a Chinese brother was travelling by train and found himself in a carriage together with three nonChristians who wished to play cards in order to while away the time. Lacking a fourth to complete the game, they invited this brother to join them. 'I am sorry to disappoint you', he said, 'but I cannot join your game for I have not brought my hands with me.' Whatever do you mean?' they asked in blank astonishment. 'This pair of hands does not belong to me', he said, and then there followed the explanation of the transfer of ownership that had taken place in his life. That brother regarded the members of his body as belonging entirely to the Lord. That is true holiness.

Paul says, " Present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification (A.V, 'holiness')" (Romans 6. 19). Make it a definite act. " Present yourselves unto God."

SEPARATED UNTO THE LORD

What is holiness? Many people think we become holy by the eradication of something evil within. No, we become holy by being separated unto God. In Old Testament times, it was when a man was chosen by God to be altogether His that he was publicly anointed with oil and was then said to be 'sanctified'. Thereafter he was regarded as set apart to God. In the same manner even animals or material things—a lamb, or the gold of the temple—could be sanctified, not by the eradication of anything evil in them, but by being thus reserved exclusively to the Lord. 'Holiness' in the Hebrew sense meant something thus set apart, and all true holiness is holiness " to the Lord " (Exodus 28. 36). I give myself over wholly to Christ: that is holiness.

Presenting myself to God implies a recognition that I am altogether His. This giving of myself is a definite thing, just as definite as reckoning. There must be a day in my life when I pass out of my own hands into His, and from that day forward I belong to Him and no longer to myself. That does not mean that I consecrate myself to be a preacher or a missionary. Alas, many people are missionaries not because they have truly consecrated themselves to God but because, in the sense of which we are speaking, they have not consecrated themselves to Him. They have 'consecrated' (as they would put it) something altogether different, namely, their own uncrucified natural faculties to the doing of His work; but that is not true consecration. Then to what are we to be consecrated? Not to Christian work, but to the will of God to be and do whatever He wants.

David had many mighty men. Some were generals and others were gatekeepers, according as the king assigned them their tasks. We must be willing to be either generals or gatekeepers, allotted to our parts just as God wills and not as we choose. If you are a Christian, then God has marked out a pathway for you—a 'course' as Paul calls it in 2 Timothy 4. 7. Not only Paul's path but the path of every Christian has been clearly marked out by God, and it is of supreme importance that each one should know and walk in the God-appointed course. 'Lord, I give myself to Thee with this desire alone, to know and walk in the path Thou hast ordained.' That is true giving. If at the close of a life we can say with Paul: " I have finished my course ", then we are blessed indeed. There is nothing more tragic than to come to the end of life and know we have been on the wrong course. We have only one life to live down here and we are free to do as we please with it, but if we seek our own pleasure our life will never glorify God. A devoted Christian once said in my hearing, 'I want nothing for myself ; I want everything for God.' Do you want anything apart from God, or does all your desire centre in His will? Can you truly say that the will of God is " good and acceptable and perfect " to you? (Romans 12. 2).

For it is our wills that are in question here. That strong selfassertive will of mine must go to the Cross, and I must give myself over wholly to the Lord. We cannot expect a tailor to make us a coat if we do not give him any cloth, nor a builder to build us a house if we let him have no building material; and in just the same way we cannot expect the Lord to live out His life in us if we do not give Him our lives in which to live. Without reservations, without controversy, we must give ourselves to Him to do as He pleases with us. " Present yourselves unto God " (Romans 6. 13).

SERVANT OR SLAVE?

If we give ourselves unreservedly to God, many adjustments may have to be made: in family, or business, or church relationships, or in the matter of our personal views. God will not let anything of ourselves remain. His finger will touch, point by point, everything that is not of Him, and He will say: 'This must go'.

Are you willing? It is foolish to resist God, and always wise to submit to Him. We admit that many of us still have controversies with the Lord. He wants something, while we want something else. Many things we dare not look into, dare not pray about, dare not even think about, lest we lose our peace. We can evade the issue in that way, but to do so will bring us out of the will of God. It is always an easy matter to get out of His will, but it is a blessed thing just to hand ourselves over to Him and let Him have His way with us.

How good it is to have the consciousness that we belong to the Lord and are not our own! There is nothing more precious in the world. It is that which brings the awareness of His continual presence, and the reason is obvious. I must first have the sense of God's possession of me before I can have the sense of His presence with me. When once His ownership is established, then I dare do nothing in my own interests, for I am His exclusive property. " Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey?" (Romans 6.16). The word here rendered 'servant' really signifies a bondservant, a slave. This word is used several times in the second half of Romans 6. What is the difference between a servant and a slave? A servant may serve another, but the ownership does not pass to that other. If he likes his master he can serve him, but if he does not like him he can give in his notice and seek another master. Not so is it with the slave. He is not only the servant of another but he is the possession of another. How did I become the slave of the Lord? On His part He bought me, and on my part I presented myself to Him. By right of redemption I am God's property, but if I would be His slave I must willingly give myself to Him, for He will never compel me to do so.

The trouble about many Christians to-day is that they have an insufficient idea of what God is asking of them. How glibly they say: 'Lord, I am willing for anything.' Do you know that God is asking of you your very life? There are cherished ideals, strong wills, precious relationships, much-loved work, that will have to go; so do not give yourself to God unless you mean it. God will take you seriously, even if you did not mean it seriously.

When the Galilean boy brought his bread to the Lord, what did the Lord do with it? He broke it. God will always break what is offered to Him. He breaks what He takes, but after breaking it He blesses and uses it to meet the needs of others. After you give yourself to the Lord, He begins to break what was offered to Him. Everything seems to go wrong, and you protest and find fault with the ways of God. But to stay there is to be no more than just a broken vessel-no good for the world because you have gone too far for the world to use you, and no good for God either because you have not gone far enough for Him to use you. You are out of gear with the world, and you have a controversy with God. This is the tragedy of many a Christian.

My giving of myself to the Lord must be an initial fundamental act. Then day by day I must go on giving to Him, not finding fault with His use of me but accepting with praise even what the flesh revolts against. I am the Lord's, and now no longer reckon myself to be my own but acknowledge in everything His ownership and authority. That is the attitude God requires, and to maintain it is true consecration. I do not consecrate myself to be a missionary or a preacher ; I consecrate myself to God to do His will where I am, be it in school, office or kitchen, counting whatever He ordains for me to be the very best, for nothing but good can come to those who are wholly His.

May we always be possessed by the consciousness that we are not our own!

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