

Loving God in All of Life - Consecration

In our church we have many different professions, occupations and states of life. Homeschooling mothers, managers, salesmen, I.T. professionals, chartered accountants, auditors, career missionaries, secretaries, teachers, drivers, plumbers, shop managers and shop assistants, security guards, bookkeepers, graphic designers, horticulturists, directors, mechanics, business owners, students, retired, single, divorced, re-married, widowed, children and parents.

If you had to total up the amount of hours in your life you will spend at your place of work, the amount of time you will spend at home, and then total up the amount of hours you will spend in your quiet time, or in church - which number will be greater? The fact is, most of our life will be spent in our vocation, and with our families.

As much as we would love to stay on the mountain with Jesus, we must descend from the highs of private worship and public worship, and enter the mundaneness of normal life. Here is where most Christians make their fundamental error regarding God's presence. They view life as operating in two modes: sacred or secular. For them, sacred moments are those spent in private or public worship, while secular moments make up all the rest. With this thinking, God's presence is restricted to church or the private devotional time, while the rest of life is a march through a spiritual desert.

This is a great shame, for if we have embraced the message of the New Testament, we must believe that all of life is sacred, and that every moment is lived in God's presence. The life of faith believes that Christ is in us, and we are in him, wherever we go and whatever we do. This is how Paul could tell us that:

“whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Cor 10:31)

If eating and drinking can be worship, then all of life can become worship. All that we do can be done to know God and to please God. Every part of life can become part of knowing God by living in his presence.

We would do well to remind ourselves that when we rise from our knees or exit the church building, we are not departing from God's presence. If we are in him, and he is in us, then we remain in his presence throughout our day. The position of the Christian life is not related to physical location. It is a *spiritual* location: we are located in the centre of the Father's pleasure.

For in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28)

The life of perpetual worship is a life of communing with God in the ordinary experiences of family, work, leisure, rest, travel, and other such everyday circumstances and experiences. As we learn to sharpen the eye of faith during the ordinary, we can come to know and love God “as we are going”.

Our biggest obstacle to perpetual worship is that the busyness of life overwhelms and distracts us, so that walking by sight replaces walking by faith. Our tendencies to self-sufficiency and independence kick in quickly, particularly when we are around the familiar.

We can think of each day's experiences in two ways: our actions, and our perceptions. All that we do,

and all that we observe or think, is to be given over to God, to be done for him, and through him. All things are to be ways of serving him, or observing him.

We can think of these two modes of being as *consecration* and *contemplation*. We consecrate our actions, as acts of love to God. Our contemplations of God's world and works become means of knowing and admiring God. Consecration is doing all you do for God, contemplation is seeing all of life in light of God.

What does consecration mean? The word *consecration* comes from Latin words meaning 'sacred' and 'come together'. It means to dedicate something for sacred purposes. You set something apart for God's use, for worship. What are we supposed to consecrate? Romans 12:1 captures what we are to do:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

The act of consecrating our 'bodies' is the act of presenting our entire selves, as those who are dead to independence, given over wholly to God for his use. All of life – not just the time in church, or in devotions belongs to God. So what must change if we are to consecrate our work and home and leisure to God?

Three things change when we consecrate all of life to God: Motive, Method, and Means.

I. Motive: *For Thy Sake*

You can, by three little words, turn every common act of your life into an offering acceptable to God. The words are “*For Thy sake.*”

For Thy Sake are three words which turn ordinary activities into sacred activities. We are so used to thinking that the things done for God are prayer, the Bible, singing, witnessing, that we do not think that we can drive, write, type, fix, clean, repair for His sake. But what does the Word say?

We have read that even eating and drinking can be done for God's glory

1 Corinthians 10:31 *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

In Colossians 3:17, Paul says,

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Every good and lawful action can be dedicated to Christ. To do it in his name, is to do it for his fame and honour. Regardless of how mundane, the simple act of dedicating actions to Christ makes them acts of important service. As Tozer said, “To God there are no small offerings if they are made in the name of His Son.” Brother Lawrence remarked that he was pleased “when he could take up a straw from the ground for the love of GOD, seeking Him only, and nothing else, not even His gifts.”

Whatever cannot be loved for his sake should not be loved at all. Whatever cannot be done for his glory

should not be done at all. All that is left, we should love for God's sake.

“François Fénelon teaches that to make our deeds acceptable to God it is not necessary that we change our occupation (if it is honest), but only that we begin to do for Christ's sake what we had formerly been doing for our own.” - Tozer, “Born After Midnight”.

We can do our work, clean our houses, teach our children, fix what is broken, eat our food and love our neighbour - all for God's sake. God becomes the ultimate end of our actions. We live our lives to please God. He is pleased not only when we perform acts of explicit adoration, but when we do work skilfully, do chores cheerfully, and do all things gratefully.

As we make God the explicit aim of all our actions, we can see how all of life can be an act of love for God. We can love people, and do what we do for them, out of love for God. We love others for God's sake.

Tozer put it this way:

"Vacate the throne room of your heart and enthrone Jesus there. Set Him in the focus of your heart's attention and stop wanting to be a hero. Make Him your all in all and try yourself to become less and less. Dedicate your entire life to His honor alone and shift the motives of your life from self to God."

What I do, I do for God. He is the recipient of this action. That will automatically exclude some activities, some attitudes, some actions. Occasionally, you may need some help in this area. You may need to study the Word, and ask other believers – can I do this for God's sake? Can I do this job, or watch this film, or do this hobby, for God's glory?

Sometimes the answer will be simple, but sometimes, it will not. To know if you can do something for God's glory, you need to know two things: you need to know what pleases God, and you need to know the meaning of the thing you're doing. I must understand from God's Word what He is like, what His will is, what He loves, and what He hates, and then I need to understand this thing I'm doing. What does it mean? What does it mean in terms of time, in terms of priorities, in terms of my motives, in terms of

That should lead me to ask, if I am doing this for God, how will that change *how* I do it?

II. Method: Do It Heartily

Colossians 3:22-23 ²² *Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.* ²³ *And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,*

If God is the recipient, then that has to change how I do all my work. If I am doing it for a teacher, for a boss, for a husband, for a child, for money, I will approach it one way. In fact, in some cases, I will do what Paul says here: “eyeservice as menpleasers”, I will work to the degree that I am supervised. I will work to the degree that there are consequences. But once I change the motive, the method also changes. If God is the one I do it for, then the way I do it changes. Did you ever think about that line in the Lord's Prayer, “*Thy Will Be Done On Earth as it is in Heaven?*” How is God's will done in Heaven?

What methods do angels use in doing God's will that might look different to the way we do it? Paul says, do it heartily. The words translated heartily in the original language are literally, work out of your soul; work from your inner being, sincerely, meaningfully; work as someone who is sincere, who wants God to receive this action as a gift.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.*

What kind of gifts do we give God? The Lord's Prayer gives us one answer. David at the threshing floor of Araunah gives us an answer. Mary and her alabaster box gives us an answer. The priests in Malachi give us a negative answer. The steward in Christ's parable who buried his talent gives us a negative answer.

Maybe 2 Corinthians 9:8 gives us much of the answer:

2 Corinthians 9:7 ⁷ *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

When you give of your finances to God, the Bible says do it deliberately, do it voluntarily, and do it cheerfully. That sounds like a simple, a good formula for doing all that we do as to the Lord. If I am going to make that sale, or do that calculation, or bake that cake, or drive that passenger, or help that customer for God – then I should do it as if God Himself were the one receiving the action, or at least the one before whom I do it. I should do so deliberately, with Him in mind. I should do so willingly, not dragging my feet. And I should do so cheerfully – with gratitude, and joy.

How might that perspective change the way you parent, study, work, and serve others? What would change? I think perhaps we must be honest. When we think of doing all that we do for God, which would mean we would do everything heartily, it might fill us with a sense of exhaustion. How could anyone live life like that?

Now this does not mean that we live at only one pace, in high gear, all the time. You can do something for the Lord, and do it well, do it quietly, simply, effectively. Because you do things heartily does not mean that you live at the point of exhaustion all the time. It means you are engaged, deliberate, and doing it with the zeal and joy that comes from doing what you do for the One you love most.

But even so, if I live a life consecrated to God, how can I possibly do all that I do heartily?

III. Means: By His Grace

Colossians 1:29 ²⁹ *To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.*

Where does Paul get the ability to labour? By striving according to His working. God's enabling grace gives spiritual strength, mental vitality, and physical ability according to our need, and according to God's sovereign decision.

God gives different amounts to different people, but we can be sure that when we consecrate something lawful to God, God will supply the grace we need.

1 Corinthians 15:10 ¹⁰ *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

2 Corinthians 9:8 ⁸ *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.*

How do we obtain this enabling power? How do we experience this grace? The answer is simple: do it for His sake, and do it heartily. If this is truly something you can do for God's glory, and you are genuinely doing it for His glory, and you are doing it heartily, then God will give you grace proportionate to the strain.

Deuteronomy 33:25 ²⁵ *Your sandals shall be iron and bronze; As your days, so shall your strength be.*

As we pray and commit what we are doing to God, we in the same breath ask Him for help and enablement. And then we demonstrate that we wanted divine grace by working heartily. You don't need grace to work half-heartedly.

That doesn't mean you will not be tired at the end of a day. It doesn't mean that parenting or studying or serving will not be difficult. It will be. God promised Adam that work would now be exhausting, difficult, and sometimes fruitless. That's part of working in a sin-cursed world. Just because you do it for God, and just because God is your strength does not mean you will not be weary. What it does mean is that you need never be in despair. You need never say, why do I labour for what does not profit? You need never say, vanity, vanity, all is vanity. Because if you are learning to do all that you do for God's sake, then all actions become part of eternity. All things done for the Lord add up.

The Lord Himself said **Matthew 10:42** *"And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."*

When every action becomes one of loving someone or something for God's sake, we are communing with God as one seeking to please him. As we do all that we do in love (1 Cor 16:14), life is perfumed with the fragrance of deliberate service to God. We may not always be looking directly at God, but we are breaking open the alabaster box of our devotion on his head at all times.

If an action is performed for God, then our ultimate devotion in that moment, is to God. If an action is performed for God, while trusting in God, then our ultimate dependence, in that moment, is on God. If we do it chiefly for the pleasure of pleasing God, then our ultimate delight, in that moment, is in God. When we love people and things for God's sake, then we love God ultimately.

This is the act of sanctifying the ordinary. Set apart the ordinary acts of your life, so that all of life may be holy unto the Lord.

A word of caution though. Because we become deliberate about doing all things for God's sake does not mean we start doing that in a day. We have spent decades living and thinking independently, and we have to create new habits – habits of saying “for thy sake, with my heart, by your grace.”

But take courage again from Brother Lawrence:

That in order to form a habit of conversing with God continually, and referring all we do to Him, we must at first apply to Him with some diligence: but that after a little care we should find His love inwardly exciting to us without any difficulty.