

Full Consecration

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

We have been talking about the failure in our own inner lives as far as victory is concerned and the failure in our outward lives, too. Such as in situations like Mark has described, where we have been in relationships with others at work or at home and we have not been to them what we knew Jesus wanted us to be.

That is what many of us experience who are born of God. Both an inner conflict and defeat with unseen things that nobody else realizes are there like temper and self pity and criticism and resentment in our hearts towards others. The things that are less than the whiteness that we know is in Jesus. Then, outwardly, really a result of that, a failure in witnessing life is an inability to witness to others or to bring others to Jesus.

Of course, the outward failure is really due to the inward failure. The fact is we're not convincing salesmen. We aren't. We so often have the words, we so often can tell them the Gospel, but we aren't convincing salesmen. In that, they do not see in us something that just makes them hunger and thirst after righteousness. They often see in us good Christians. That's what the world calls us and what we call ourselves. Good Christians. We go to church and we have a good fellowship, but they don't see anything in us that makes them hunger and thirst after righteousness. Probably, a lot of them question our love for them.

Actually, they have good reason for it because most of us who are God's children are only half his children. That is, before we were children of God at all, we just lived for ourselves. That's what the whole world lives for. Just lives for itself. We were brought up that way, even those of us who had parents who knew God. Most of us caught the spirit very quickly from school and from the magazines and the television screens. We realized, yes, that's what we're here to do. We are to live for ourselves, to make ourselves happy, to get a good job, and to be successful. So, most of us have lived for ourselves from the very beginning of our years.

Then, we began to realize that that's not the way we were meant to live. That, in fact, God himself had put each one of us here to do something for Him that nobody else could do and that that's why we were here, to live for him. We heard that usually in the form of a very simple gospel. We heard that because we were living for ourselves, we were condemned to death. And we would never be able to live with God in his heaven, unless we repented of the things that we were doing and we asked him to forgive us and to come into our hearts.

Most of us took that step. But, we never actually stopped living for ourselves. We just started living for him, along with living for ourselves. I don't know, I think in knowing Mark and Becky, I would think that their dear lady would see in them a fully surrendered life. But I know that many people look at you and me and they see people who are unselfish as much as they want to be unselfish.

That's it. Too often they look at you and me and they don't see a love that is much greater than the love they get from the social worker or the love they get from their friends. That is, a love that is given, first of all, to ourselves; first of all, to having a happy life ourselves; and, then,

gives them a little love after we have taken care of ourselves

Now, I think that's because most of us actually are like that, you know. Most of us actually are like that. I think you're a great group and I think you're dears. I am glad that you are my brothers and sisters but the fact is that most of us who are carnal, who are living defeated Christian lives, only look good on the outside.

So, actually, I don't need to know much about you, you know, so don't say, oh, you mean you're saying that about me. I'm saying it by faith. If you're like a carnal Christian, then your love is not a fully unselfish love. It's kind of a love that goes first to yourself. That is, you're concerned primarily with your job, with how your career is going, how your work life is going.

You're interested, too, in your marriage prospects or in your present marriage. You're interested in having a nice home and some security. You're interested in knowing what you're going to do when eventually you retire. Then, when you've got those things kind of settled, then, at a lower level, comes your love for Jesus and your love for others.

Of course, that's why others don't see Jesus' self-sacrificing love in us because it isn't there. It actually isn't there. We have stopped living only for self and we have started to try to live for God. But, we have never really stopped living for self. Of course, what happens with most of us is, as our life goes on, we enter into the great professional deception of Christendom.

Christendom is so organized as to make half-surrendered Christians comfortable. That's it. Most of our churches are so organized that we can pay somebody else to go out and be missionaries and we can pay somebody else to look after the guys on that corner over there, the down and outs. We ourselves can get on with our own lives and most of us enter into that half-surrender or controlled, surrendered life. We have never really dealt with the fact that repentance was only the first step in getting back to what we were originally meant to do.

Repentance is saying to God, "Lord, I see I'm living for myself. I see I am living for my pleasure and my satisfaction. I see that. I'm sorry. Lord, I didn't know it for a while; I've known it for a while; and, I repent. I know that's wrong. I see it has driven Jesus to the Cross. Lord, I repent." We kind of ask Jesus to come into our hearts but we never fully turned and said, "Lord, God, I consecrate myself, my life, all that I am, my possessions, my future, my success or failure, I consecrate it to you and I will live for you from this moment forth."

Now, that's what we haven't done, you see. We haven't made a full consecration to God. That's why so many of us live in this twilight zone. We know that, in fact, God destroyed all the evil in us on Calvary but we know fine well why that has not been actualized in our lives. Because we have not believed it all destroyed. We have only believed the bits destroyed that we were willing to let go. We stopped drinking excessively. We stopped swearing. We stopped going to bed with people. We stopped stealing. We stopped being dishonest. We have believed those and, if you note the things that you really were willing to let go of, God brought victory in those things. But, the whole business of self, of living for self, is still at the center of our lives.

Of course, you don't need me to tell you that it's even stronger now on our campuses. You know that. I mean, we did have a kind of break from it in the hippie days because there was a reaction against America living for prosperity and getting on to the little career ladder. You remember the way we all said, oh, that's not the way to go.

We want to be free and we want to be ourselves. So, we broke from that but, you probably know, those of you who are on campus that we're back in the old circle. It's now get done, get at the books, let me discover truth; no, no, let me get the books, let me get the right degrees to get the right job to get security and get a career that will bring some kind of steadiness in this chaotic world. So, we're back on that kind of bandwagon.

Loved ones, that's why we have defeat in different parts of our lives. There is a whole area of self that we have never believed to death. You remember, that's the principle—be it unto you according to your faith. You are getting exactly the life that you want. I know it's hard. But you are getting exactly the life that you want. When you sink down in self pity, either crying real tears over the way you are being treated by somebody, or simply having that feeling of hurt inside? We say, "Oh, how could they do that to me?"

When you do that, you are willing to do that? You want to do that. You want to be the center of your own attention and you want to cry over yourself. You are not really willing to see that crucified on the Cross. You know fine well it was crucified. You know that old self pitying, resentful self was crucified with Christ but you don't want to let that go. So, you do not believe it to death on the Cross. Therefore, it is not brought to death in you. The tragedy is the beauty of Jesus life, therefore, does not shine from you. So, most of us are running a holding action.

Loved ones, what I am asking you to do is to examine tonight the state of your consecration. Not your repentance. Most of us have repented here of the things that are most obviously wrong in our lives, especially the things that were hurting ourselves and some of the things that hurt other people. But, I am talking about those things within that you know you have not consecrated to God. I'm talking about the things that you're still holding on to.

This old book, *A Living Sacrifice*, is by George Asbury McLaughlin. I brought it because I thought, maybe the old guys saw things that we ourselves didn't see. Maybe they can bring something to us. Of course, this man says, when Paul made his voyage to Rome, a great storm arose which threatened the loss of the ship and the lives of those on board. In order to save the ship, the sailors threw overboard the wheat and other articles that composed the cargo but later they had to cast themselves overboard also and abandon the ship.

This is the way many people consecrate to God. They proceed by degrees. They yield up the less important things first rather than give themselves. They give up prejudices or happy habits or their association's money. They begin on the outer circumference but self in the center is still untouched. They keep drawing nearer to the center. The less important things are given first and then things of greater value but still they are not consecrated until they come to self and give that.

"Self", for most of us, does mean our futures. It does mean our futures. I don't think the issue is whether God wants you in Africa or in India. I don't think the issue is whether God wants you to take care of those loved ones over in that house. I think the issue is -- are you still in control of what yourself intends to do with your life? Do you still think of it as your future? Do you still have it fenced around with, well, I'd like to do that; I'd be willing to do this; but, I wouldn't do that? Or, is your future consecrated to God? Have you said, "Lord, whatever, whether it means I will have no money for the rest of my life, whether it means I will have to sell my home; whether it means I will be regarded as a failure by even my friends here, Lord, whatever. You died at 33 for

me. Lord, it's a small thing for me to give up my future to you, for you to use to do what you want with?"

Loved ones, I think it's easy in a community like ours to organize what we think our full surrender is for victorious Christians. I think it's easy for us to get into a little kind of an arrangement here whereby you say, well, that would mean maybe going with Christian Corps [Christian business organization]. Well, I could take that. Or, that would mean going into this thing or that thing. I think it's possible, you see, for us to draw our own little circle but it's still a circle that we're in control of. It's not something that we've abandoned to God.

So, have you your future consecrated to God, that's part of your self? Have you your marriage? Those of you who are married. Those of you who aren't married. Have you consecrated that to God? Have you said, "Lord, whatever way you want to deal with my wife, that's the way I will be to her? I will no longer take it as my right to deal with her in a certain way. I will be to her what you want me to be. Whatever. I will no longer judge for myself the way I think I should deal with her. Lord, whatever you want me to be, that's what I'll be." Your career. Would you be willing to give it up? Would you be willing to start something absolutely new? Would you be willing to do whatever God wants? That's part of what consecration means.

Of course, after you get those things given up or consecrated to him -- because it's not just saying, okay, do what you want -- it's a loving handing over. It's filling your hand with those things and saying, "Lord, there, tell me what you want to do. It's your life. What do you want to do?"

After you've done that, then you begin to get to the hard layers of ice that have built up over the years from resistance to God's will that you have exercised. You have hard layers of self that have been built up over the years as you have resisted God's commands to you repeatedly. They're in all kinds of areas. They're in areas of the way you spend your time, the way you eat, the way you treat people of the same sex, the way you treat people of the opposite sex, the way you've dealt with your money. All kinds of commands that God has given you through the years since you became his child. You've resisted him and the whole layer is like hardened ice. Or, like the earth that was beaten down on the wayside where the seed of the word of God could not penetrate because it had become like concrete.

Now, after you get all the things given over, after you throw all the things overboard, then God's Spirit begins to deal with the self. That is a whole system of disobediences that you have expressed to God and he can only begin to dig down through those by the power of His Holy Spirit if you want it with all of your heart.

That's the interesting thing. God will not pull consecration from you. He will require you to come and say, "Lord, help me to consecrate all. Holy Spirit, show me, show me where there's a subtle attitude of self here that is not consecrated to you." Bit by bit the Holy Spirit will take you through those layers.

Repeatedly he'll take us, as many of us have found ourselves, to a place where we think, thank you, Lord, I never knew there was that depth of evil in me. And we'll think we've come to it and we'll say, Lord, I received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and, the next day, the Holy Spirit will witness clearly by allowing us to fall into some old self attitude that, no, that wasn't the last layer and we'll have to go back to that altar and get down to things with the Holy Spirit until

gradually he blasts through layer after layer after layer.

Loved ones, you'll need to come to obedience in each of those layers; otherwise, He won't give you new light for the next layer. You do need to walk in obedience in those things to adopt a new attitude. That's what it means in Leviticus. I'll just point that out to you. It's Leviticus 20. It was that verse that I couldn't find last Sunday. Leviticus 20:7-8, "Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am the Lord, your God. Keep my statutes, and do them; I am the Lord who sanctify you." You see, loved ones, there's a lot that we have to do ourselves that God believes we are able to do. He says, "Consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy." That is, be set apart from living for yourself or living for the world. "For I am the Lord, your God. Keep my statutes and do them." See, he expects us to obey the things that he's shown us.

It ties up with that verse Acts 5:32, isn't it. "The Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him." So many of us think, oh, no, I want the Holy Spirit to help me obey him. You get the whole picture there of one of those governments in South America. They're going to give all their authority and their weapons to people to speak on their behalf. They don't go into the mountains to find all the rebels, all the people who disobey them and give them their weapons and give them their power and give them their authority. They go out throughout the land to find the people that submit their wills to them and then they give them the weapons and the authority.

So it is with God. God does not give the greatest power on earth, the power of the Holy Spirit, to rebels, to those who are disobedient. He gives the power of the Holy Spirit to those men and women who have submitted to him their wills completely and utterly. You cannot be like Christ yourself. You're right. God alone can sanctify you but you can stop being like the devil yourself. You can stop being like Satan yourself. I agree with you. You can't be like Christ unless the Holy Spirit sanctifies you, but you can set yourself apart from Satan. God requires us to do that, loved ones, to consecrate ourselves with all our hearts.

Some of the other things that this man, George Asbury McLaughlin [American Methodist minister, 1851-1933] says is, "it is like a wedding contract." It is something that you do at a definite time. It is not something that you drift into. There comes a time when you have to decide, am I going to continue to live partly for myself and do a little bit on the side for God to try to ensure that I'll get into Heaven or am I going to believe what this Bible says that God put me here for a purpose that only I can fulfill? You have to decide sooner or later what your life is going to be like.

I would ask you tonight. Do you really believe that your God, your Creator, has put you here to do something and to live a life that nobody else can live? Do you really believe that? Well, if you do believe that, will you consecrate yourself to him tonight for that purpose? Whatever that means. Will you give yourself to him tonight for that purpose? Will you sign a marriage contract with him and say, "Lord, whatever happens in the future, whether I feel that you're touching me or not, I now commit myself to you and I complete my side of this covenant?" This man, McLaughlin says, "God says, I have made an everlasting covenant with you."

Now, will you make that everlasting covenant with your God? Your God will take you seriously when you take your God seriously. Your life will turn around internally and externally if you will commit and consecrate yourself to your Creator to do what he wanted you to do, whatever the cost. But, it is, it's like a marriage contract, loved ones. It's as real as that.

McLaughlin goes on and says, "It is more than for service." Another popular notion is consecration to work in order to obtain power for service. We've heard a lot of that in connection with the whole charismatic movement. The true charismatic movement is a movement that is based, first, on inner purity and then, after that, on outward power. But, do you remember, there's been a great emphasis, almost like Simon, the magician. [Acts 8:9-24] "Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying 'give me also this power, that any one on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.'"

So, many of us, of course, want to be great workers. This idea dwarfs and belittles consecration making it only human doing. Consecration is more than doing. In fact, doing is a very small part of it. It means to be, to do, and to suffer the will of God -- all three. Sometimes it is easier to do the will of God than to be what we ought to be or to suffer the will of God.

The fact is that consecration is for being. Jesus said, "You shall receive the Holy Spirit and you shall witness"? No. You shall be my witnesses. The reason outsiders don't believe us is we're not the same all the time, you see. We're all nicey, nicey at church or when we're talking to them but, in our own quiet, private times at home, we are all kinds of raging demons and devils. To their face we say, "We love you, brother. But, when we're on our own, we care just about ourselves. We continue saying we love them until we have to go out on a rainy night or a snowy night to help them or when we have to put off something that we're going to enjoy ourselves. That's what the Holy Spirit wants us to get at. Are we prepared to consecrate all of ourselves to be absolutely and utterly what God wants us to be?

It was a great revelation to me when some man gave that illustration that I've shared with you before. If your heart at this moment, if we could put your heart on some kind of x-ray machine, and we could project your heart, your head and your mind and all the thoughts and feelings and motives and attitudes in it onto this screen, would you be happy? Or, would you be embarrassed?

Do you realize that God not only wants us to have clean insides, he made us to have clean insides? Do you know that it's possible to look at a person with a single mind? That is with nothing else in your heart, no unclean things in your heart? Do you know that it's possible to think the same in love about a person behind their back as it is to their face? God made us to be single, to be clean right the whole way through. God wants us to consecrate in order to be holy inside and out.

Loved ones, God is able to make you that but it requires you to consecrate. It requires you to say, "Lord Jesus, you died and you took me with you to death. Lord, I want you to take the whole of me. Everything that you see, Holy Spirit, that is not right inside me, take it all. I accept that it was crucified with Christ and I now consecrate myself to be whatever you want me to be.

Loved ones, that's something of what full consecration is. Maybe this would be useful because I think some of us get caught in it the way McLaughlin says others did in when he wrote in 1890. It shows you how we human beings never change. That was probably 90 years ago. "Many people are consecrated to their feelings and emotions more than to God. They have come to estimate their religious state by the amount of good feelings they have. When they feel bad, they think they have no religion. When they feel well, they suppose it is an indication of the possession of very much grace. Some of these people think very little about their conduct and character but very much of their feelings. Whether they live right or not does not concern them very much but they are very much disturbed if they do not feel good."

"This is one of the weaknesses of modern religion. People are seeking forms and feelings more than God. Such religion is mere sentiment and so far has it gone that the majority of seekers at the altars of religion, whether it be for pardon or heart purity, are seeking more an emotional experience than a radical change of character. Many want to feel nice whether they are right or not. The result is a large class of religious weaklings. They seek the loaves and fishes of religion, instead of righteousness." Of course, feelings are just self. You see that. I mean, feelings are just self. I want to feel good. I want to feel joy. I want to feel forgiven. I want to feel peace. I want to feel uplift. It's just self. I mean, it's just hedonism. It's just self demanding more pleasure and stimulation.

"Many want the results who do not desire the call of salvation. Here's the great vantage ground of Satan. He harasses many good people right at this point and gets the advantage over them and destroys their souls. Perhaps there's no more common form of satanic attack than right here. It's not too much to say that every Christian has had more or less trouble right at this point." Then, he says, "It is a common experience to hear people say, 'I am the Lord's but I do not feel any different.' This very expression goes to prove that they are not wholly given up to God. If they were wholly given to him, they would be given up in the matter of their emotions, forms and feelings. 'Lord, whether I feel this or not, whether I never feel happy again. Lord, I'll give myself to you. Whether I never feel joy or peace again, Lord, I'll give myself to you.' It is what John Bunyan said, "Come heaven, come hell, I will leap into your hands by blind faith." If they were wholly given to him, they would be given up in the matter of their emotions. When wholly given up to God, we shall be content to feel as he wishes. The desire for some remarkable manifestation in our experience comes from a willfulness whereby we desire our own way, instead of God's way. Many people linger about altars seeking justification and entire sanctification who never obtain either because they want God to come to their terms and save them in their way and not in his way. Such people, although they may think they have consecrated a great many things to the Lord, are leagues distant from entire consecration because they have not given their feelings to him. Reader, if you have been seeking in vain the fullness of the blessing, stop and ask yourself if the cause of your failure is not because you have expected God to save you in your own way, instead of allowing him to save you in his way."

I remember somebody saying to me, "Don't look for somebody else's experience." Jesus bore you in a way that he did not bear me. Jesus bore you in a way that is exactly right for you. Jesus, moreover, bore things for you that he did not bear for me. He bore things in me that he didn't bear in you. You and your Lord Jesus have to get face to face with each other. You ought, loved ones, to give him what he has died to buy for you. You owe that to him, just as I do.

You owe him your whole life. You owe him your future. You owe him your reputation. You owe him all the right to comfort or to happiness. You owe him that. He gave everything up for you. He went to hell for you. You have a personal arrangement that you only can make with him. When you do that and consecrate all to him, he will come into you in a way that is uniquely yours. He will be in you uniquely himself. You will be freed and anointed with the Holy Spirit to begin to work for him. Of course, that's what we need, you saw that. What Mark told about Jesus needs some men and women who will give themselves as fully to him as he has given himself to you and me.

Loved ones, I would ask you to get down to this business of consecration. Do you realize that you and I are in a very advantageous position? He has already made his sacrifice. He's already made his move. You and I can sit here under the Cross and play with dice, play with dice for the next 10, 20 years, while we keep pleading the blood that falls upon us. Well, it's not right.

That's why it says in the Bible, "Let us present ourselves to him as a living sacrifice which is our reasonable service." It's very reasonable. He has bought you and me with the full price of his own life and it's reasonable to ask us to give him that full price. So, wherever, loved ones, any of us have something in our lives that we have not consecrated to God, I would suggest that we do it tonight.

A brother shared with me this past week that when he heard that little thing that I read at the end, he decided last Sunday it was time to move. He made his move on Monday, I think. They were at a camp meeting. You remember. It's that one. A little boy once went to a camp meeting. As his mother was putting him to bed, he heard a noise in an adjacent tent. He asked what it was. His mother responded, "It is a man praying and I judge by the way he prays that he wants to be wholly given up to the Lord." The little boy replied, "Why don't they then, Mother?"

We should stop playing around. We should stop bluffing. We should stop uttering all these holy intentions. If the Man died for us and we owe him everything. If he didn't die for us, we owe nothing. If he did die for us, we owe him everything. If he's the Son of our Maker, we owe him everything anyway.

But, if this Maker has a certain plan for our lives and we're fiddling away our time on things that we want to do, we're not only sinners and rebels, we're foolish, dumb men and women. So, it's plain, loved ones. I would say why don't you get down to business. Why don't we have a few minutes here and a few minutes of quietness and why don't you settle things with God. Say, Lord, I want to consecrate everything. Show me, Holy Spirit, where I'm not willing and I'll deal with that. I'll be as good as my word.