

# Dedication, Sanctification and Consecration

Romans 12: 1-3

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There are three words often used by us in the opening up of certain truths, and an explanation of these words may help in the understanding of the truths conveyed by them. The three words are — Dedication, Sanctification and Consecration. These words do not actually occur in the verses we have read, but the teaching connected with them is very clearly outlined therein.

The word "consecration" is often used when "dedication" would have been more accurate; "dedication" is sometimes referred to when "consecration" has really been the thought in mind. As considering the verses we have read we may be helped to see the distinctive thought in relation to each word.

## Dedication — Romans 12: 1

The word translated "dedication" is found three times in the New Testament, and is also of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament. We have the noun "dedication" in John 10: 22, and the verb "dedicated" in Hebrews 9: 19 (J.N.D. gives this word as "inaugurated," but a concordance will clearly show it to be the verb of the word used in John 10 which J.N.D. leaves as "dedication"). The other reference is in Hebrews 10: 20 where it is rendered in the Authorised Version as "consecrated," but is actually the word "dedicated" and is so translated by J.N.D. We cite these references to show that it is a Scriptural word which contains an element of truth of undoubted importance.

Dedication means "given up to," or "devoted to." It is used to describe those things which were devoted to the service of God. All the things willingly offered by the children of Israel towards the construction of the tabernacle were of this character. The offering of the princes recorded in Numbers 7 is spoken of as "dedicating," and the material given *willingly* by the people was doubtless of this character too. As handed to Moses it was at once devoted to the service of God. No one would have attempted to reclaim anything so given; it was irrevocably given up to the service of God. With this in mind we refer again to the first verse of Romans 12.

"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."

We have called attention to the fact of the children of Israel dedicating certain materials to the service of God, but here we go beyond certain *things*, and are faced with the fact that it is *ourselves* we are to dedicate, not merely that which we possess. It follows that if we dedicate ourselves to God all that we possess will be at His disposal also. The word is "your bodies," and that involves ourselves entirely — our minds, our movements, our desires, are all bound up with and function in relation to our bodies. It is to be absolute, and without any reserve.

Let us note that we are *given the privilege of doing this*. That which is referred to here is not what Christ has done for us, nor what the Holy Spirit has done for us, nor what God has done for us. What divine Persons have done for us is clearly stated in the first three verses of Romans 8, now the challenge is as to what our answer is to be. If we appreciate that which has reached us through the mercies of God, we shall yield ourselves and all that we have in willing service to God. This is true *dedication*.

The Levites after their dedication, as recorded in Numbers 8, are surely a type of this. All their subsequent movements had a bearing on the tabernacle service, and likewise our service should be related to those interests of divine Persons which answer in a spiritual sense to the tabernacle today. How wonderful that we in our day may be here for the pleasure of God, devoting our whole life to His interests!

Whatever is devoted to God must be characteristically holy; He can use only that which is such in His service. Our bodies are said to be earthen, corruptible, etc., but Scripture does not refer to them as sinful. If the body were *sinful*, how could we yield it to God as holy? No physical change has yet taken place in our bodies, but we nevertheless can present them as holy for the service of God.

This word holy is closely allied with sanctification, which means "kept apart from evil." Before the mercies of God reached us and set us right with Himself, we used our bodies entirely for our own will, and in sinful practices. Now we may use this *same body* in the holy service of God. It is not that the body has changed; *we* have changed, and the evidence that we appreciate the work of God which has wrought this change is seen in our preparedness to give to Him all that we are capable of giving in view of His own pleasure. That is the meaning of the word "acceptable," which carries the thought of "well-pleasing." What a triumph for God and what blessing for us, that we who once lived only to please ourselves, now live for the pleasure of God!

Ere leaving this verse, do not let us think that this is some advanced state into which we grow. The apostle says it is our "reasonable service," or it may read "intelligent service," and should be true of every saint of God who has rightly valued the work that God has done on our account. If God has done so much for us, and so values us that He has done this to secure us for Himself, then ought we not in everything to devote ourselves to Him for His service today? This truly is what *dedication* involves. May we all seek grace to answer to it.

#### Sanctification — Romans 12: 2

"And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Previously the thought of "dedication" was the subject in mind. Now in this second verse we see just as clearly that "sanctification" is the portion of truth with which the Spirit would engage us. If our dedication is to be carried out in conditions suitable to God, the need for sanctification is seen to be imperative. We cannot hope to serve God acceptably except as marked by the features enjoined upon us in this verse.

Two words stand out in contrast to one another, "conformed" and "transformed." The prefix "con" indicates "together with," and the prefix "trans" indicates "apart from." This makes the meaning of the exhortation clear. We are not to be *together with* this world, but *wholly apart* from it. It is a scriptural axiom that our three dangers are the world, the flesh, and the devil. Just as clearly it is taught that the world is in opposition to God as Father; the devil is in opposition to Christ, and the flesh is in opposition to the Spirit. We cannot limit these matters in a hard and fast way, but it has often been pointed out that in the *main* this is how they are presented to us; the first epistle of John makes the truth quite clear. Hence in this verse, where the will of God is in view, the world is seen as the great hindrance to our walking subject to His will. Why should we who are "called from above, and heavenly men by birth," desire to be like the men of this world? Why be anxious to dress like them, talk like them, associate with them, when we belong to God whom they neither know nor desire to serve? Rather ought we to be "like unto men that wait for their Lord," (Luke 12: 36). Our greatest hindrance in carrying out our "dedication" is striving to be like this world.

In contrast to this we are exhorted to be "transformed" by the renewing of our minds. To those who desire to look up the meaning of these words it will be found that the word "form" used in the compound word "conformed" means a *similitude on the surface*; whereas the word "form" in "transformed" means a *radical change in the person who is in that form*. The other usage of this translated "conformed" is in 1 Peter 1: 14 (translated there as "fashioning") and here again it is clearly seen to be an outward, external likeness. We may thank God that we are persons who have been delivered from the world; why then should we be anxious to be like it in appearance?

The word "transformed" is found in three places in the New Testament, and is differently translated each time. In Matthew 17: 2 it is translated "changed," while in our verse it is translated "transformed." The first reference shows clearly what the word means. The true glory of our Lord shone out in a way the disciples had not before seen. It was not merely an outward garment which was manifested, but what the Lord was *in Himself shining out*. Thus it should be with us. As the subjects of the word of God, and with the Spirit of God dwelling in our hearts, what we *are* as saints of God should be seen *shining out*. This is the real bearing of "transformed." Truly then, if what we are as the fruit of the work of God in our souls constantly shines out from the vessel in which that work has been accomplished, we shall not, yea we may say, we *cannot* be "conformed" to this world.

We are to note that this transforming is the result of the "renewing" of our minds. How important then to control the bent of the mind! This would be what the apostle refers to in Romans 8: 6, "to be spiritually minded." That is, we think along the lines of the Spirit's promptings, not the line of thought which marked us when self-interest was the governing desire of our lives. Now our desire is to please God, making room for His will, not our own. As we allow these desires to control our thoughts, and consequently our movements, we shall be moving here for the pleasure of God, and we shall certainly "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." There could not be anything good about *our* wills, nor could they produce anything acceptable to God, and how far short of perfection must any thoughts of ours be? God can accept from us that only which is of Himself, and we have the great privilege of serving Him in this hostile world as we allow Him to control and guide us. This will lead to true "sanctification." One further statement by the Lord Jesus will show again the bearing of this important truth — "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth," John 17: 16, 17.

If we have made the decision to devote ourselves to God for His service, may we ever keep in mind that this necessitates a separate walk through this world. Trying to serve God whilst consorting with this world will leave us destitute of the power needed to accomplish His will, and will result in the service itself becoming a matter of bondage, instead of being the delight of our souls. Such delight it will indeed be if we sustain our dedication by sanctification, and are thus found pursuing the will of God for His glory and for our present blessing.

#### Consecration — Romans 12: 3

We have considered the thought of "dedication" in verse one of our chapter, and that of "sanctification" in verse 2; now we hope to see the truth of "consecration" in verse 3. This word is often confused with "dedication," but the two are quite distinct. Most of us will have noticed the caption "Consecration" at the head of the hymn,

"Take my life and let it be,  
Consecrated Lord to Thee."

but the real bearing of that hymn is dedication, not consecration. This we hope to see from the

Scripture before us.

We have to turn to the Old Testament to find the meaning of this word, and to note carefully its bearing in the chapters where it occurs. That it is used twice in the New Testament in our Authorised Version is true; both references are in the epistle to the Hebrews 7: 28 and Hebrews 10: 20. A reference to the New Translation by J. N. Darby will show that the word is "perfected" in chapter 7, and "dedicated" in chapter 10. Although the actual word "consecrated" is not really found in the New Testament, the truth covered by that word is certainly there.

The word first rightly appears in Exodus 28: 41, to which verse a marginal reference reads — Hebrew "fill their hand." (See also a note to the same verse in the New Translation). The word "consecration" means then "to fill the hand." For an illustration of this we have but to turn to Exodus 29 where we read that "the other ram" (v. 19) was a "ram of consecration" (v. 22). The inwards and the right shoulder of that ram were placed upon the hands of Aaron and upon the hands of his sons to be waved as a wave offering before the LORD. Moses then took them from their hands and burned them on the altar as a burnt offering for a sweet savour before the LORD. We further read that certain parts of the offering became food for the priests (v. 28). We know that this offering speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ in His devotion to the accomplishment of the will of God. Sanctified priests offered the more excellent portions of the offering to God, and fed upon the rest. What needs to be emphasized is that *all was placed upon their hands* before they offered it. Another placed these parts upon their hands, they did not do this themselves. It was their privilege to offer that which was placed there, but it was given to them first in view of offering. In this we see the meaning of the word "consecration" to be "to fill the hand." It is clear from this portion of Scripture that consecration indicates what was first given to the priests with a view to its being used in the service of God. With this in mind we may clearly see why Romans 12: 3 is suggested as having consecration in view.

We have already seen that dedication (v. 1) is something which *we* are to do as having apprehended and appreciated what God has done for us. Then in verse 2 we see that our dedication is maintained by sanctification. Both these verses speak of that which is from *our* side, what *we* are to do, whereas consecration refers to what God supplies from *His* side to enable us to carry out our dedication in devotion to His will. There is no suggestion that we are consecrated only as the result of our being dedicated and sanctified. Verse 3 would show that that is not so; but if we are to walk in the power of our consecration we must be both dedicated and sanctified. Through lack of these two features much that God has furnished the saints with for His present service has been lost.

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

Here we surely have the thought of consecration, that which God has dealt to every one of us. However dedicated we may be, however marked by sanctification from the evil which is in this world, if God had not supplied us with spiritual means, we could not serve Him here. He has supplied each one of us with something which is to be used in His service. In Ephesians the apostle is led by the Spirit to call the gift "grace," while here he speaks of it as "faith." Grace shows the wonderful condescension of God in giving to us the ability to serve Him; faith indicates the confidence we need to use our spiritual endowment in that service. Our service is amongst God's people, but it is as serving God that we serve the saints.

Later in the chapter we have "gifts differing" (v. 6), but there is also that which is given to *each of us*, God has filled our hands. In verse 6 the gift is again referred to as "grace." This word may be

translated "free favour," and if we value this favour more we should find our service to God in serving His people a pleasure and not a burden.

There are three places in the New Testament where the truth as to the saints being spiritually gifted is taught. Here in Romans 12, again in 1 Corinthians 12, and also in Ephesians 4. Romans 12 has the accomplishment of the will of God in view, hence it is *God* Himself who is said to give the gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12 the great end in view is "the manifestation of the Spirit," therefore it is the Spirit who gives the gifts. Finally in Ephesians 4 what is in mind is that the body may function for the display of Christ, hence Christ Himself is the Giver of the gifts.

What a favoured people we are! Gifted by God with a view to the accomplishing of His will as we move through this world; gifted by the Holy Spirit in order that we may be able to further spiritual increase in our local gatherings, and gifted by our Lord Jesus Christ so that we be capacitated to help one another into a better knowledge of His greatness and glory, the greatness and glory of Christ, the Son of God (Ephesians 4: 13).

May we all seek to be more dedicated to the will of God, preserving in holy conditions, and by constant practical sanctification the gift given to us, in order that we may be able to use in power and holiness that wherewith our hands have been filled by God — even our "consecration."