Sanctification Versus Consecration

By Samuel L. Brengle

A State senator's wife regularly attended a series of our holiness meetings, and apparently became quite interested. One day she came to me, and said, "Brother Brengle, I wish you would call it 'consecration' instead of 'sanctification.' We could all agree on that."

"But I don't mean consecration, sister; I mean sanctification; and there is as big a difference between the two as there is between earth and Heaven, between man's work and God's work," I replied.

This woman's mistake is a very common one. She wanted to rob religion of its supernatural element and rest in her own works.

It is quite the fashion now to be "consecrated" and to talk much about "consecration." Lovely ladies, robed in silk, bedecked with jewels, gay with feathers and flowers, and gentlemen, with soft hands and raiment, and odorous with perfume, talk with honeyed words and sweet, low voices about being consecrated to the Lord.

And I would not discourage them; but I do want to lift up my voice with a loud warning that consecration, as such people ordinarily think of it, is simply man's work, and is not enough to save the soul.

Elijah piled his altar on Mount Carmel, slew his bullock and placed him on the altar, and then poured water over the whole. That was consecration.

But Baal's priests had done that, with the exception of putting on the water. They had built their altar, they had slain their bullocks, they had spent the day in the most earnest religious devotions, and, so far as men could see, their zeal far exceeded that of Elijah. What did Elijah more than they?

Nothing, except to put a few barrels of water on his sacrifice – a big venture of faith. If he had stopped there, the world would never have heard of him. But he believed for God to do something. He expected it, he prayed for it, and God split the heavens and poured down fire to consume his sacrifice, and the stones of his altar, and the very water that lay in the trenches. That was sanctification!

What power had cold stones and water and a dead bullock to glorify God and convert an apostate nation? But when they were flaming, and being consumed with the fire from Heaven, then "the people fell on their faces, and said, The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God."

What do great gifts and talk and so-called consecration amount to in saving the world and glorifying God? *"Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to*

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be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3). It is God in men that enables them to glorify Him, and work together with Him for the salvation of the world.

God wants sanctified men. Of course, men must be consecrated – that is, given up to God in order to be sanctified. But when once they have yielded themselves to Him, yielded their very inmost selves, their memories, minds and wills, their tongues, their hands and feet, their reputations, not only among sinners, but also among saints; their doubts and fears, their likes and dislikes, their disposition to talk back at God and pity themselves and murmur and repine when He puts their consecration to the test; when they have really done this and taken their hands off, as Elijah placed his bullock on the altar and took his hands off for ever, then they must wait on God and cry to Him with a humble, yet bold, persistent faith till He baptizes them with the Holy Ghost and fire. He promised to do it, and He will do it, but men must expect it, look for it, pray for it, and if it tarry, wait for it.

A soldier went home from one of our meetings, fell on his knees, and said: "Lord, I will not get up from here till You baptize me with the Holy Ghost!" God saw He had a man on His hands who meant business, who wanted God more than all creation, and so He there and then baptized him with the Holy Ghost.

But a Captain and Lieutenant whom I know found that "the vision tarried," so they waited for it, and spent all the spare time they had for three weeks, crying to God to fill them with the Spirit. They did not get discouraged; they held on to God with a desperate faith; they would not let Him go, and they got their heart's desire. I saw that Lieutenant some time afterward, and oh! how I was amazed at the wonders of God's grace in him. The spirit of the prophets was upon him.

"All Heaven is free plunder to faith," says a friend of mine.

Oh, this waiting on God! It is far easier to plunge madly at this thing and that, and do, do, do, till life and heart are exhausted in joyless and comparatively fruitless toil, than it is to wait on God in patient, unwavering, heart-searching faith, till He comes and fills you with the Almighty power of the Holy Ghost, which gives you supernatural endurance and wisdom and might, and enables you to do in a day what otherwise you could not do in a thousand years, and yet strips you of all pride, and leads you to give all the glory to your Lord.

Waiting on God empties us that we may be filled. Few wait until they are emptied, and hence so few are filled. Few will bear the heart-searchings, the humiliations, the suspense, the taunt of Satan as he inquires, "Where is your God now?" Oh! the questionings and whisperings of unbelief that are involved in waiting upon God, hence the people are but few who, in understanding, are men and women in Christ Jesus and pillars in the temple of God.

Jesus commanded the disciples, saying: *"Tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high"* (Luke 24:49). That must have been quite a restraint put on restless, impulsive Peter; but he waited with his brethren, and they cried to God, and searched their hearts, and forgot their fears and the angry rulers who had murdered their Lord, forgot their jealousies and selfish ambitions and childish differences, until they were exhausted of all self-love and self-goodness and self-trust and their hearts were as the heart of one man, and they had but one desire, and that a mighty, consuming hunger for God; and then suddenly God

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came – came in power, came with fire, came to purge, and cleanse, and sanctify them through and through, and dwell in their hearts, and make them bold in the presence of their enemies, humble in the midst of success, patient in fiery conflicts and persecutions, steadfast and unswerving in spite of threats and whippings and imprisonment, joyful in loneliness and misrepresentations, and fearless and triumphant in the face of death. God made them wise to win souls, and filled them with the very spirit of their Master, till they – poor humble men that they were – turned the world upside down, and took none of the glory to themselves, either.

So, sanctification is the result not only of giving, but also of receiving. And hence we are under as solemn an obligation to receive the Holy Ghost and "be filled with the Spirit," as we are to give ourselves to God. And if we are not filled at once, we are not to suppose that the blessing is not for us, and, in the subtle, mock-humility of unbelief, fold our hands and stop our crying to God. But we should cry all the more, and search the Scriptures for light and truth, and search and humble ourselves, and take God's part against unbelief, against our own hearts and the devil, and never faint until we have taken the kingdom of Heaven by violence, and He says, "O man, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

God loves to be compelled, God wants to be compelled, God will be compelled by the importunate prayer and faith of His children. I imagine God is often grieved and disappointed and angry with us, as the prophet was with the king who shot but three arrows when he should have shot half a dozen or more, because we ask so little, and are so easily turned away without the blessing we profess to want, and so quickly satisfied with a little comfort when it is the Comforter Himself we need.

The Syro-phoenician woman, who came to Jesus to have the devil cast out of her daughter, is a sample believer, and puts most Christians to shame by the boldness and persistence of her faith. She would not be turned away without the blessing she sought. At first, Jesus answered her not a word, and so He often treats us today. We pray and get no answer. God is silent. Then He rebuffed her by saying that He had not come to such as she, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. That was enough to make blaspheming skeptics of most nineteenth-century folks. But not so with her. Her desperate faith grows awfully sublime. At last, Jesus seemed to add insult to injury by declaring:

"It is not meet to give the children's bread to (pet) dogs."

Then the woman's faith conquered, and compelled Him, for she said: "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the children's table."

She was willing to take the dogs' place and receive the dogs' portion. Glory to God! Oh, how her faith triumphed, and Jesus, amazed, said: "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Jesus meant to bless her all the time, if her faith would hold out. And so He means to bless you.

Now, there are two classes of people who profess to consecrate themselves to God, but upon inquiry it will usually appear that they are consecrated more to some line of work than to

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God Himself. They are God's housekeepers, rather than the bride of His Son – very busy people, with little or no time nor inclination for real heart-fellowship with Jesus: The first class might be termed pleasure-seekers. They see that sanctified people are happy, and, thinking it is due to what they have given and done, they begin to give and to do, never dreaming of the infinite Treasure these sanctified ones have received. The secret of him who said, "God, my exceeding joy," and, "The Lord is the portion of my soul," is hidden from them. So they never find God. They are seeking happiness, not holiness. They will hardly admit their need of holiness – they were always good – and God is found only by those who, feeling the deep depravity and need of their hearts, want to be holy. *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled"* (Matt. 5:6). This class are usually good livers, hearty eaters, very sociable, always dressed in the fashion – religious epicures.

The other class may be rightly called misery-hunters. They are always seeking something hard to do. They believe in being on the rack perpetually. Like Baal's priests, they cut themselves – not their bodies, but their minds and souls; they give their goods to feed the poor, they give their bodies to be burned, and yet it profits them nothing (1 Cor. 13:3). They wear themselves out on a hard bond-service. It is not joy they want, but misery. They judge of their acceptance with God, not by the joy-producing presence of the indwelling Comforter that makes the yoke easy and the burden light, but rather by the amount of misery they are ready to endure or have endured; and they are not happy, and they fear they are not saved, unless there is some sacrifice for them to make that will produce in them the most exquisite torment. They have died a thousand deaths, and yet are not dead. Their religion does not consist in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," but rather of grit and resolution and misery.

But these people do not really make greater sacrifices than sanctified people, only they make more ado over them. Not being dead, it hurts them to submit to God and yet they feel compelled to do so. Nor are their sorrows greater than those of sanctified people, only they are of a different kind, and spring from a different root. They have misery and sorrow because of the sacrifices they have to make, while the sanctified man counts these things all joy for Jesus' sake; and yet he has continual sorrow, for the sorrows and woes of a world are upon his heart, and, but for the comfort and sympathy Jesus gives him, his heart would sometimes break.

Still, these people are good and do good. God bless them! But what they need is a faith that sanctifies (Acts 8), that, through the operation of the Spirit, will kill them and put them out of their misery for ever, and bring joy and peace into their tired hearts, so that in newness of life they can drink of the river of God's pleasures and never thirst any more, and make all manner of sacrifices for Jesus' sake with all gladness.

It is sanctification, then, that we need, and that God wants us to have, and that the Holy Spirit is urging upon us, every one. It is a way of childlike faith that receives all God has to give, and of perfect love that joyfully gives all back to God; a way that keeps the soul from Laodicean sloth and ease on the one hand, and from hard, cold Pharisaical bondage on the other; a way of inward peace and pleasantness and abounding spiritual life, in which the soul, always wary of its enemies, is not unduly elated by success, nor cast down by disappointment, does not measure itself by others, nor compare itself with others, but, looking unto Jesus, attends strictly to its own business, walking by faith, and trusting Him in due time and order to fulfill all the exceeding great and precious promises of His love.

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