

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: Consecration to God: Proverbs 3:7-12

The Bible says, "You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 20:7).

A technical definition of consecration means that you are to set yourself apart from evil, turn to the Lord, and be prepared to be used by God.

Consecration plays an important role in your growth toward God. But consecration has 2 parts; our part and God's.

Our part is the practical side of separating ourselves from sinful living. Our part is the topic of this section about how to repent.

God's part of our being consecrated, is to prepare us for His use by *actually making us holy*. Note that in being prepared for holy use, God has to also prepare our body for being used in ministry.

If you are a Christian, God has already cleansed you on the inside and made you holy. But consecration in the Old Testament was for cleansing the outside of vessels too.

Both our part and God's part in consecration work together.

Half of our part in consecration involves separating ourselves from evil by continually working with our heart so that we drink from earthly sources less and less all the time. But doing that is only half of what we can do for practical holy living.

The other half of **our part** in consecration is that of actually drawing near to God and drinking.

God designed us so that we have to be "drinking" from something. By our drinking from God, purity works its way into our experience because enjoying God's presence becomes our preferred way of quenching our thirst, not sin or unwanted behaviors. By drinking from God, the earthly ways of unrighteous living become less and less attractive to us.

But by our turning to God and drinking something else happens: God is able to do His part in consecrating us.

By our drawing near to God and our letting Him draw near to us, God is able to prepare us for His use because He washes us holy all the while He is drawing near to us.

Do you want to be prepared for God's purposes? You have to draw near to God and let Him draw near to you, or the outside of your vessel won't be consecrated to God.

God will do His part. We just have to do ours. **Practical holiness and the cleansing of God for holy use cannot be separated.** One without the other is not possible.

Dying to Self

A wealthy university graduate chose to live frugally in a single room, cooking his own meals. As a result he was able to give two million dollars to foreign missions. In explanation of his choice he wrote these words: "Gladly would I make the floor my bed, a box my chair, and another box my table, rather than men should perish for want of knowledge of Christ." I am not suggesting that all Christians are called upon to forfeit the normal comforts of life; only, when God calls them to a life of sacrifice, they be willing to leave all and follow Him.

We have here before us three exhortations, each of them enforced with a good reason:—

I. We must live in a humble and dutiful subjection to God and his government (v. 7): "Fear the Lord, as your sovereign Lord and Master; be ruled in everything by your religion and subject to the divine will." This must be, 1. A humble subjection: Be not wise in thy own eyes. Note, There is not a greater enemy to the power of religion, and the fear of God in the heart, **than conceitedness of our own wisdom**. Those that have an opinion of their own sufficiency think it below them, and a disparagement to them, to take their measures from, much more to hamper themselves with, religion's rules.

2. **A dutiful subjection**: Fear the Lord, and depart from evil; take heed of doing anything to offend him and to forfeit his care. **To fear the Lord, so as to depart from evil, is true wisdom and understanding** (Job 28:28); those that have it are truly wise, but self-denyingly so, and not wise in their own eyes. For our encouragement thus to live in the fear of God it is here promised (v. 8) that it shall be as serviceable even to the outward man as our necessary food. It will be nourishing: It shall be health to thy navel. It will be strengthening: It shall be marrow to thy bones.

The prudence, temperance, and sobriety, the calmness and composure of mind, and the good government of the appetites and passions, which religion teaches, tend very much not only to the health of the soul, but to a good habit of body, which is very desirable, and without which our other enjoyments in this world are insipid. **Envy is the rottenness of the bones; the sorrow of the world dries them; but hope and joy in God are marrow to them.**

II. We must make a good use of our estates, and that is the way to increase them, v. 9,10. Here is,

1. **A precept which makes it our duty to serve God with our estates: Honour the Lord with thy substance.** It is the end of our creation and redemption to honour God, to be to him for a name and a praise; we are no other way capable of serving him than in his honour. His honour we must show forth and the honour we have for him. We must honour him, not only with our bodies and spirits which are his, but with our estates too, for they also are his: we and all our accessories must be devoted to his glory. **Worldly wealth is but poor substance, yet, such as it is, we must honour God with it, and then, if ever, it becomes substantial.**

We must honour God, (1.) With our increase. Where riches increase we are tempted to honour ourselves (**Deuteronomy 8:17**) and to set our hearts upon the world (Psalms 62:10); but the more God gives us the more we should study to honour him. It is meant of the increase of the earth, for we live upon annual products, to keep us in constant dependence on God. (2.) With all our increase. As God has prospered us in everything, we must honour him. Our law will allow a prescription for a *modus decimandi*—a mode of tithing, but none *de non decimando*—for

exemption from paying tithes. (3.) With the first-fruits of all, as Abel, Genesis 4:4. This was the law (Exodus 23:19), and the prophets, Malachi 3:10. God, who is the first and best, must have the first and best of everything; his right is prior to all other, and therefore he must be served first. Note, It is our duty to make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion, to use them and the interest we have by them for the promoting of religion, to do good to the poor with what we have and abound in all works of piety and charity, devising liberal things.

Proverbs 3:7-12; Proverbs 3:13-20

2. A promise, which makes it our interest to serve God with our estates. It is the way to make a little much, and much more; it is the surest and safest method of thriving: **So shall thy barns be filled with plenty.** He does not say thy bags, but thy barns, not thy wardrobe replenished, but thy presses: "God shall bless thee with an increase of that which is for use, not for show or ornament—for spending and laying out, not for hoarding and laying up." **Those that do good with what they have shall have more to do more good with.** Note, If we make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion we shall find our religion very serviceable to the prosperity of our worldly affairs. **Godliness has the promise of the life that now is and most of the comfort of it. We mistake if we think that giving will undo us and make us poor. No, giving for God's honour will make us rich, Haggai 2:19. What we gave we have.**

III. We must conduct ourselves aright under our afflictions, v. 11,12. This the apostle quotes (Hebrews 12:5), and calls it an exhortation which speaks unto us as unto children, with the authority and affection of a father. We are here in a world of troubles. Now observe,

1. What must be our care when we are in affliction? We must neither despise it nor be weary of it. His exhortation, before, was to those that are rich and in prosperity, here to those that are poor and in adversity. (1.) We must not despise an affliction, be it ever so light and short, as if it were not worth taking notice of, or as if it were not sent on an errand and therefore required no answer. We must not be stocks, and stones, and stoics, **under our afflictions, insensible of them, hardening ourselves under them, and concluding we can easily get through them without God.**

(2.) We must not be weary of an affliction, be it ever so heavy and long, not faint under it, so the apostle renders it, not be dispirited, dispossessed of our own souls, or driven to despair, or to use any indirect means for our relief and the redress of our grievances. We must not think that the affliction either presses harder or continues longer than is meet, **not conclude that deliverance will never come because it does not come as soon as we expect it.**

2. What will be our comfort when we are in affliction? (1.) That it is a divine correction; it is the chastening of the Lord, which, as it is a reason why we should submit to it (for it is folly to contend with a God of incontestable sovereignty and irresistible power), so it is a reason why we should be satisfied in it; for we may be sure that a God of unspotted purity does us no wrong and that a God of infinite goodness means us no hurt. It is from God, and therefore must not be despised; for a slight put upon the messenger is an affront to him that sends him. It is from God, and therefore we must not be weary of it, for he knows our frame, both what we need and what we can bear.

(2.) **That it is a fatherly correction; it comes not from his vindictive justice as a Judge, but his wise affection as a Father.** The father corrects the son whom he loves, nay, and because he loves him and desires he may be wise and good. He delights in that in his son which is amiable and agreeable, and

therefore corrects him for the prevention and cure of that which would be a deformity to him, and an alloy to his delight in him. Thus God hath said, As many as I love I rebuke and chasten, Revelation 3:19. This is a great comfort to God's children, under their afflictions, [1.] That they not only consist with, but flow from, covenant-love. [2.] That they are so far from doing them any real hurt that, by the grace of God working with them, they do a great deal of good, and are happy means of their satisfaction.