

## CHRIST'S DEMAND FOR CONSECRATION

*2* <sup>12</sup>After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days. <sup>13</sup>Now it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>In the temple courts he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers sitting [at their tables]. <sup>15</sup>He made a whip out of cords and drove all [the animals] from the temple courts, both the sheep and the oxen; and he poured out the money changers' coins and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup>To those who were selling doves he said, Take these things out of here; do not make my Father's house into a marketplace. <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for your house shall consume me. <sup>18</sup>The Jews therefore demanded of him, What sign do you give us, seeing that you have done these things? <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. <sup>20</sup>The Jews said, For forty-six years this temple was in [the process of] being built, and will you rebuild it in three days? <sup>21</sup>But he was speaking about the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup>After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; then they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. (Jn. 2:12-22)

### **Introduction**

A Christian man describes his conversion and subsequent Christian life in these terms: One evening that I shall never forget, I invited Christ into my heart. He came into the darkness of my heart and turned on the light. He built a fire in the cold hearth and banished the chill. He filled the emptiness with His own loving, wonderful fellowship.

That man then announced to Christ, "Lord, everything I have belongs to You. Let me show You around and acquaint You with the various rooms of my life—Your new home!"

He first took Christ into "the library" (the study of the mind.) What would Christ find in your "library" or mine? Is it filled with romance novels? Would He find there any copies of pornographic magazines? What about the T. V.? Would He find it constantly turned on? Would He find it being used with little or no discretion? Would He find it polluting our mind with immorality, wanton violence, obscene "humor," and the hedonistic philosophy of the world—if it feels good, do it?

Next the man took Christ into the "dining room" (the appetites and desires of one's life.) How much of our weekly budget of time do we spend on such "junk food" items as sports, T. V. viewing, or just hanging out at the mall? How much do we spend on such unhealthy fare as gossiping with friends, fighting with our spouse, struggling with our parents? How much of our weekly budget of time is spent on soul nourishing "foods"—participating in Bible study and prayer groups, using our spiritual gifts for the glory of Christ and the sake of His body, the church?

Then they proceeded to “the recreation room” (that part of the life reserved for entertainment and friendships.) Do we have Christian friends? Have we asked the Lord to provide us with a good Christian friend? Is our life filled with unwholesome friendships—friends who have no time for God and no place for God in their lives? Do our unbelieving friends draw us away from Christ? Or are we, by our life and witness, drawing them to Christ?

Once back upstairs, they walked past “the hall closet” (the secret part of one’s life)—but Christ would not allow it to remain off limits and outside of His inspection and control. What needs to be cleaned out of our “hall closets?” Is it a long-held grudge against someone for a wrong committed against us? Is a particular case of jealousy or envy? Is it a love affair with a liquor bottle or a pornographic magazine? As Christians, we must live lives that are consecrated to Christ, because that is what Christ demands of us.

In the passage of John 2:12-22 we find the Lord Jesus coming to the temple in Jerusalem, taking offense at what He finds there, and then taking the dramatic action of cleansing that holy place. The temple in Jerusalem no longer stands as the earthly dwelling place of God; today, the LORD has made the church of Christ and the individual Christian’s life the temple and dwelling place of His Holy Spirit:

*... do you not realize that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You do not belong to yourself; <sup>20</sup>for you were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God with your body. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)*

Both as the church of Jesus Christ and as individual believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we must live lives that are consecrated to Christ, because that is what Christ demands of us.

## **I. Consecrate Yourself to the LORD, because that is Your Calling**

John informs us that this act of cleansing the temple took place at the time of the Passover. The Passover was one of the three great feasts of the Jews; one of the three times in the year when all the Jewish males were required to appear before the LORD.

What was the significance of the Passover? It was the yearly commemoration of the LORD’s miraculous deliverance of His people out of the bondage of Egypt—which itself was a representation of their deliverance out of the bondage of sin and judgment. The annual Passover was also the reminder that the people of God are to be wholly consecrated to their Lord and Savior. This was symbolized by their eating of unleavened bread—bread that was “unpolluted” with the presence of leaven. We may compare the original Passover instructions given by the LORD through Moses with the New Testament interpretation offered by the Apostle Paul:

*For seven days you are to eat unleavened bread. On the first day remove the leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything with leaven in it from the first day through the seventh shall be cut off from Israel. (Ex. 12:15)*

*Get rid of the old leaven so that you may be a new batch [of dough] without leaven, just as you are unleavened, for Christ, our Passover [Lamb], has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Cor. 5:7-8)*

Those who have been redeemed by the LORD have been redeemed for the LORD. Following the Exodus, the LORD led His people Israel to Mt. Sinai where He reminded them of the fact that He is their God and where He then proceeded to give them His law as the standard for their lives: *"God spoke all these words, saying, <sup>2</sup>I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. <sup>3</sup>You shall have no other gods beside me"* (Ex. 20:1-3.)

The Old Testament Passover was a model and precursor of Calvary: the shedding of the blood of the Passover lamb for the salvation of the people would find its true fulfillment in the shedding of Christ's own blood to redeem His people from the curse and corruption of sin.

Again, as with the Passover, so with Calvary; those who are redeemed by the LORD are redeemed for the LORD:

*... do you not realize that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You do not belong to yourself; <sup>20</sup>for you were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God with your body. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)*

*[Christ] died for all, so that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and rose again. (2 Cor. 5:15)*

Let us consecrate ourselves to the Lord, because, as a Christian, this is our calling.

## **II. Consecrate Yourself to the LORD, or You will Experience His Indignation**

Upon entering the temple courts, Jesus found the sacred precincts occupied by peddlers and money-hungry merchants. Some were selling sacrificial animals to the worshipers; others were carrying on a profitable trade as moneychangers. As the commentator, Leon Morris, points out, "The 'changers of money' plied their trade because it was permitted to make money offerings in the temple only in the approved currency. Men from other countries would bring all sorts of coinage with them and this had to be changed into acceptable coinage" (*The New International Commentary, The Gospel According to John*, p. 193.)

Upon witnessing this disgraceful spectacle, the Lord Jesus fashioned a whip and proceeded to cleanse the temple. The sheep and oxen were driven out of the temple precinct, with the merchants fleeing behind them; the profits of the moneychangers were poured out upon the floor as their tables were overturned.

Can this be an act of righteous anger and indignation performed by the sweet and gentle Jesus, as He is pictured by so many people; the “harmless Jesus,” whose placid portrait adorns so many homes? This is an act of the holy Son of God when His righteous anger has been aroused. When His eyes behold His Father’s house turned into a common marketplace, instead of being maintained as a hallowed place of worship. When His eyes behold love and devotion to money instead of love and devotion to God. When His eyes behold religious formality and the entertaining of sin, rather than purity of life and commitment of heart to God.

To bear the name of Christ, but to persistently practice impurity of life—in any part of our lives—is to invite an encounter with the righteous indignation of the holy Son of God. Let us soberly bear in mind the words of the Apostle Paul, *“Do we dare provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?”* (1 Cor. 10:22.)

What is true on an individual basis is equally true on a corporate level. The Apostle Peter warns that the sanctifying/separating judgment of God will begin with the house of God. Referring to the suffering the church was undergoing, Peter declares, *“the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins first with us, what shall be the final destiny of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”* (1 Pet. 4:17.) In other words, the Lord will purge and purify His church before He finally judges the world.

The church of Jesus Christ in the United States, at the close of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, is fearfully ripe for such a visitation. Two Christian researchers (George Barna and William Paul McKay, *Vital Signs*, Crossway Books, Westchester, IL, 1984) offer the following assessment of their findings:

... numerous indicators suggest that rather than adhering to a Christian philosophy of life that is occasionally tarnished by lapses into infidelity, many Christians are profoundly secularized, and only occasionally do they respond to conditions and situations in a Christian manner. Recent research shows that many Christians are especially vulnerable to the worldly philosophies of materialism, humanism, and hedonism (p. 136.)

Regarding materialism, ... Two out of three [professing Christians] express such love for money, possessions, and other material objects that their Christianity cannot be said to rule their hearts. For instance, more than half of the Christian public believes that they “never have enough money to buy what they need”—not what they “want,” but what they “need.” One out of

four believers claim that “the more things you have, the more successful you’ve been.” Not only are these beliefs counter to those expressed in Scripture, but the fact that the proportion of Christians who affirm these values is equivalent to the proportion of non-Christians who hold similar views indicates how meaningless Christianity has been in the lives of millions of professing believers (pp. 141-142.)

... seven out of ten Christians support at least some of the principles central to the humanist perspective. Attitudes about abortion provide such a clue. The fact that 40 percent of the born-again public believes that there is no right or wrong position on this matter intimates their frivolous, clouded understanding of the sanctity of human life in the eyes of God, and the responsibility that we have to honor God through life. Similarly, 42 percent of Christians interviewed said that without the government laws, there would be no real guidelines for people to follow in daily life. When close to half of the Christian body overlook the Bible as an authoritative guideline for society, the restricted relevance of faith and spiritual commitment in people’s lives becomes clear (p. 142.)

... A recent national survey discovered that no fewer than seven out of ten Christians are prone to hedonistic attitudes about life. The study found ... strong support among Christians for the ... notion that an individual is free to do whatever pleases him, as long as it does not hurt others. Two out of five Christians maintain that such thinking is proper, thus effectively rejecting the unconditional code of ethics and morality taught in the Bible. A similar proportion of [professing Christians] deny the possibility that pain or suffering could be a means of becoming a better, more mature individual. That, of course, refutes the scriptural teaching that pain and suffering are a means to perfect our faith. As a final example, three out of ten Christians agree that “nothing in life is more important than having fun and being happy.” ... the Word of God clearly teaches that the highest values are those of praising God, obeying his commands, and seeking his Kingdom (p. 141.)

... even on purely spiritual matters an appallingly high ratio of Christians stray from the nucleus of their professed faith. One out of five born-again people do not even consider religion to hold a place of great importance in their lives. One in ten assert that many of the values and principles taught in the Bible are outdated and of little practical use. Twenty percent consider the mere possibility of sacrificing their lives for the advancement of Christianity to be out of the question (p.p. 142-143.)

Let us soberly consider what the LORD has done in other parts of His church, and what instruments He has seen fit to use:

An East European scientist told us, “Communism with the suffering it has brought to believers has swept away corrupt and lukewarm Christianity in

our country. It has created a vacuum in millions of people ... that can be truly filled only with vital Christianity. And that is what is happening—Christianity, purified and revitalized, is spreading throughout our country.” (*Christianity Today*, 3/1/85, p. 68)

Let us consecrate ourselves to the LORD, so that we will not incur His righteous indignation.

### III. Consecrate Yourself to the LORD, by Exhibiting Zeal for God

The Lord Jesus views the temple as His Father’s house (vs. 16,) and the words of Psalm 69:9 are applied to Him: *“Zeal for your house shall consume me.”* Our Lord Jesus Christ was consumed with an all-encompassing passion for God: love for God, devotion to God—the fulfilling of the great commandment, as expressed in Deuteronomy 6:5, *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”*

When it comes to the glory and honor of God, our Lord Jesus Christ is consumed with holy and godly zeal. The example He sets for us in matters of religion is not one of cold formalism or pious indifference. It is, rather, that of holy passion for God and for His honor and glory, for His house and His kingdom, for His righteousness and truth.

By the standards of the world, it is appropriate to display fanatical passion at such things as a sporting event or rock concert. It is expected that one shall not hesitate to sacrifice himself and his family, giving all that it takes, to make a success in the realm of business. But in the matter of religion, zeal and devotion are looked upon with the highest degree of contempt—they are considered to be abnormal and dangerous to the peace of society. In the eyes of the world, the ideal religion is that which is polite, tolerant, and kept “locked away in the closet of private opinion.” But the religion of the Bible, the truth of God, must be lived out to the full in a life of devotion to God, imitating the zeal of the Lord Jesus Christ for the things of God His Father.

Jesus teaches us by His life and actions that the one thing you cannot do in moderation is serve God. *“[Jesus] said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’<sup>38</sup>This is the first and greatest commandment”* (Matt. 22:37.) Addressing the church in Ephesus, the Lord Jesus declares, *“I know your works, [I know] that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were [either] cold or hot.<sup>16</sup>So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth”* (Rev. 3:15-16.)

Let us consecrate ourselves to the LORD, by exhibiting zeal for God and His kingdom.

## Conclusion

As Christians, we must live consecrated lives, because that is Christ's demand. Christ not only demands that we live consecrated lives, Christ also stands ready to forgive when we confess our sins and He stands ready to supply His own power to live a new and consecrated life for God. We all need to be pointed to Christ as the Source of our cleansing as well as the Source of our spiritual power.

Let us hear again that Christian who describes his conversion and the living of the Christian life in terms of Christ coming to occupy his life as one takes ownership of a house:

I said to myself, "I have been trying to keep this heart of mine clear for Christ. I start on one room and no sooner have I cleaned that then another room is dirty. I begin on the second room and the first room becomes dusty again. I am so tired and weary trying to maintain a clean heart and obedient life. I just am not up to it!" So I ventured a question: Lord, is there any chance that you would take over the responsibility of the whole house and operate it for me ... ? Would you take the responsibility to keep my heart what it ought to be and my life where it ought to be?

I could see his face light up as he replied, "Certainly, that is what I came to do. You cannot be a victorious Christian in your own strength. That is impossible. Let me do it through you and for you. That is the way."

Dropping to my knees, I said, "Lord ... from now on I am going to be the servant. You are going to be the Lord." Running as fast as I could to the safe, I took out the title deed to the house ... Then returning to him, I eagerly signed it over to belong to him alone for time and eternity. "Here," I said, "here it is, all that I am and have forever. Now you run the house."

He took my life that day and I can give you my word, there is no better way to live the Christian life. He knows how to keep it in shape and deep peace settles down on the soul. May Christ settle down and be at home in your heart as Lord of all. (*My Heart, Christ's Home*)