

## **CONSECRATION IN THE LIFE OF FAITH GENESIS 17**

A dear Christian brother made an interesting comment to me some days ago. He said, “Pastor, I’ve been thinking about my Christian life. I have been a Christian for more than fifty years. It’s been many years since I made any kind of public decision for the Lord and I have been thinking that it will probably be helpful to me to make a public rededication to the Lord.” I appreciated the sincerity and the insight of his comment. The Lord may well have been the source of that impression in his life.

It has been thirteen years since Abram had an encounter with the Lord. The last encounter had revolved around the birth of Ishmael. But when he is 99 years old the Lord came to him and called for a renewal of the covenant between him and Abraham. In a real sense this experience described in our chapter was an experience of the re-consecration of life to the Lord.

Consecration to God is basic to the life of faith. While there is a once for all quality in consecration, it is never a finished product. As long as we are in this world we will be working on our consecration to God.

This chapter from the life of the man of faith, Abram, holds some important lessons for those of us who are concerned about the consecration of our lives to God.

## **I. THE SUFFICIENCY OF GOD IS THE BASES OF CONSECRATION.**

When the Lord God came to Abram in his 99<sup>th</sup> year, he confronted Abram with a fresh revelation of Himself. “I am God almighty; walk before me and be blameless.” This self-designation as God almighty has been of special interest to theologians across the years. The Hebrew word is El-shaddai. El is one of the names of God in the Old Testament. It is the name associated with the power and the might of God. Shaddai has an interesting background. Scholars have debated the exact significance of this word, but it means at least this – God is completely sufficient for His people. It usually comes into our English text as “God almighty.” One possibility for Shaddai is that it comes from the common noun in Hebrew Shad which means “breast.” The significance of it in this would be as Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse says, “God, then, is the One on whose breast His children find their rest and from whom they would draw their nourishment.”

The significance of this is obvious. If God is “almighty,” all sufficient,” “the One from whom we receive all that we need,” then there is no need for any other God. Why would you need to search for or to find another God if in this one God there is all that you could ever need? This is the basis of consecration. You can give yourself totally to this one God because He is all sufficient, all mighty, the source of everything you need.

Our halfway consecration would suggest that we perceive God as being less than adequate. We may need someone beside Him to be our strength and our help in life. In calling Abraham to consecration God affirms to him “I am God almighty!”

## **II. THE PLEASURE OF GOD IS THE GOAL OF CONSECRATION.**

When God spoke to Abram He said, “I am God almighty; walk before me and be blameless.” The call to walk before the Lord and be blameless reveals the goal of this consecration to the Lord. We walk before Him for His pleasure.

Both of these expressions used in this statement point us in that direction. To walk before the Lord is to live with an awareness of His presence. It is to so conduct our affairs that they will gain His approval and be His enjoyment. This is an important side of this life of consecration. We do not live the consecrated life in order to live up to some religious standard handed down to us by the world about us. We do not do it to add something to our own lives. We do it because it is our desire to please Him.

The word translated “blameless” is a rich word. The word is elsewhere translated, “without blemish, complete, full, sincere, sound, without spot, undefiled, upright, and whole.” These different translations remind us that this word is associated with sacrifices. This is what was required of a sacrifice that was to be offered to the Lord. It was to be “without blemish” or blameless. The goal of the consecrated life is to be a pleasure to the Lord God Himself.

I have been impressed in recent months with how much concern the Apostle Paul had concerning the blameless life. As he prayed for his friends in the early churches, he was constantly praying that in the last day when they stood before God that they would be “blameless.” It is increasingly a concern of my heart. The concern is not that we just live up to the standards of the religious community of which we are a part, but that we go that extra step in consecration and

live a life that is a pleasure to the Lord God Himself. So, the goal of the consecrated life is the pleasure of the Lord.

### **III THE PROSPERITY OF GOD IS THE REWARD OF CONSECRATION.**

The Lord then said to Abraham, “I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.” As a reminder of just how much this increase would involve God did something more. After Abram fell face down in adoration before the Lord, the Lord said, “As for me, this is my covenant with you; you will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendents after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendents after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give you as an everlasting possession to you and your descendents after you; and I will be their God.” What a promise! Consecration to God has as its reward a relationship with God in which God can bless the person.

When a person sets their heart on God and God alone, they receive as a side benefit the things that many other people set their hearts upon. Some people set their hearts on riches, but Abraham set his heart upon God and received riches. Some people set their heart upon making a name for themselves. Abraham set his heart upon God and God has honored his name for all eternity. Some people set their hearts upon making their children important, Abram set his heart upon God and God made his children important. God’s prosperity is the consequence, the reward, for consecration. In his book, [By My Spirit](#), Jonathan Goforth tells about a Moslem

warrior named Mahmoud who was responsible for the conquest through northern India. It was the practice of this zealous Moslem to destroy every idol that fell into his hands. When he came at last to the city of Guggeratt, where there was an idol which was held in unusually high esteem by the people, the chief leaders of the city came and pled for him to spare this one important idol. They contended with the general that the idol was so important to them that they would probably die themselves if he destroyed the idol.

The general considered their appeal for a while. It seemed almost heartless to bereave these poor people of what was apparently life and death to them. Then he remembered his vow to not spare one idol. The will of Allah was plain. He had a sledge hammer brought to him and with it he dealt the idol one terrific blow. To his amazement there poured from the rent in the image a stream of jewels and precious stones. The people had hidden their treasures in the image, hoping to move the conqueror to spare it. Consider what his loss would have been if he had stayed his hand at the sacrifice of the one last idol. This is the way it is in consecration. When you remove that last competitor to the place of God in your life, out of it there comes this flow of riches. These riches will be spiritual, emotional, physical, and eternal. They will become a part of your life in a significant and measurable way. The prosperity of God is the reward of consecration.

#### **IV. THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE FLESH IS THE SIGN OF CONSECRATION.**

As the sign of the covenant that he was establishing with Abram, God gave circumcision. In response to the instructions of the Lord, Abraham circumcised himself, Ishmael, and all of the male members of his household. The word “circumcision” itself is made up of two words. One word means “around” and the other means “to cut.” So circumcision meant to cut around. Each

male member of the family of Abraham and all of his descendents that were to come, were permanently marked in this way. In this ritual they underwent the cutting away of the flesh.

The spiritual significance of this act of circumcision is the thing that we are most interested in. Spiritually circumcision symbolized the cutting away of the “flesh.” “Flesh” in this sense represents all of the old life principle apart from God. When a person is circumcised spiritually it means they have made God and God alone the object of their faith. It means that they have decided that they will no longer put any confidence in themselves. They will no longer trust in “self” and what self can do.

This is at the very heart of spiritual consecration. When a person is spiritually and vitally consecrated to God, they have died to self. Their life is no longer under the control of self. Their life is no longer dependent upon self. They are dead to self. Instead they have come to trust in God and God alone. They belong to God and depend upon God to do with them and for them what ever needs to be done. This is the significance of this moment in the life of Abraham and the significance of this moment spiritually in the life of each one of us.

If you have come to the place in your Christian life that you are like my friend I talked about in the beginning, then you may need to consider the implications of this passage. If you feel the need for something fresh and new in your walk with God, it may be that there is a need for deeper and more meaningful consecration in the life. The basis for such consecration is always the sufficiency of God. The goal of such consecration is always the pleasure of God. The reward of such consecration is always the prosperity of God. The sign of such consecration is

the cutting away, the circumcision of the flesh. Do you sense the need for such a renewed consecration in your life? If you do, let me urge you to attend to it now.