

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR LORD

ROM 12:1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. [2] And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

This verse and others like it indicate a beginning relationship with the Lord that requires sacrifice. While this “concept” of presenting our bodies to God as living sacrifices frightens many new believers, there is no chance of omitting this process if we are to advance into God. While the consecrating of our bodies to do the whole will of God has many levels of commitment it must begin by taking a stand against our own self-interest and personal desires.

The end of “consecration” is total abandonment to God with no areas of our lives held back and no barriers left between us and God. The one who has reached this level of dedication no longer has any desire to live just for his own satisfaction and his goals are total devotion to God.

From this it should be clear that our own experience is somewhere between these two extremes. From the Romans 12 dedication to total abandonment, God must take us through many complex experiences. The reason is because from promise to fulfillment many barriers must be torn down that at the present time make a separation between us and God. “Self” with each of its counterparts of flesh establish barriers between an open, naked [glorious] relationship with our creator.

ROM 8:5] For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. [6] For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, [7] **because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God;** for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; [8] **and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**

ROM 8:12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- [13] **for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**

To make the transition from “self life” to “living in the spirit” in harmony with God, a death to “self” must take place. The purpose of this paper is to give a simple outline of a typical process that may develop as we are slowly “converted” from “self” to God.

[**BEGIN**] We enjoy God’s blessings and are personally blessed by the knowledge that

God knows me and has extended his grace to me. Our relationship with God centers

around what God has done FOR me. As we advance through the foundational experiences of forgiveness of sins, water baptism, baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Romans 12 “sacrifice”, God may use us to win souls or heal the sick, prophesy, do miracles or cast out demons. We assume

our joy is full. We seek God for His gifts, His grace, His comfort, His goodness, His power and we find our pleasure and satisfaction in spiritual things.

[Our Goal] Self-satisfaction by using the spiritual things to satisfy my needs, my comfort, my grace, my prosperity, my ministry, my advancement in the church, my Bible study and my blessing in the Christian experience. Pain, suffering, rejection, trials and persecutions come upon us as some strange thing that must be quickly conquered. Since they confuse us and take us by surprise we seek a remedy instantly and ask others to pray for us and help us rebuke the enemy.

We must return to the blessings and the favor of God so that our joy will return and the spiritual experiences continue. We want to get back to “normal” as soon as possible because this whole negative experience is not convenient or pleasant.

[PROCESS] God seeks to begin the process of converting us from “self” to God and His eternal purpose. Most of us begin by being self-centered, selfish, self-assertive, self-conceited, self-confident, self-conscious, without self-discipline, self-importance, self-indulgence, independent, self-pity, pride of self, self-reliant, self-righteous, self-sufficient and full of self-will. We begin looking for self-gratification but now in the religious or spiritual realm of ministry. Even to the blessings that we receive when we praise the Lord.

God may begin the “conversion process” with some believers by hiding His presence for a time. With others by trials and conflicts. With others by withholding “success” in ministry. With others by lifting the anointing until we realize that without Him we can do nothing. God may begin to tighten up our finances or to limit our confidence in people. There may be certain relationships that will hinder our progress in the future that He must remove.

[WARNING] Since our “ministry” was based in our senses and outward life we will strive to return to that “ministry”. We may feel that we need to hype our faith so we step out into areas not assigned to us and speak great or ridiculous things trying to stretch our faith. We may rebuke the devil and begin “spiritual warfare” to get back what we think was stolen from us. If God is dealing with our finances we may look up all the scriptures on prosperity and begin making proclamation and naming it and claiming it. When God withholds His “blessing” our joy departs and we get discouraged or depressed because we want things to be the way they were. Our confidence has been in the blessings of things and our ability to minister to others. The “conversion” must take us from blessings center to God center and from outward life to the inward life. We may ask ourselves if we find our pleasure in blessings or in God who is the source of blessings.

[DANGER] The minute our pleasure in “spiritual experiences” or in the manifestation of power ceases we may immediately turn to other sources of pleasure to compensate. We may fantasize about a great ministry to the multitudes or try for a television or radio ministry to regain our pleasure and satisfaction in ministry. “Self” is confused and seeks for an answer to what happened. Some may turn to carnal pleasure that God has already judged. Some give up and fall away. Some will think the “loss of ministry” is a conspiracy or some else’s fault or that some one has undermined their ministry out of jealousy. Since few will seek God for the answer, church splits are the result.

[COUNCIL] When suffering trials, testings, separation, rejection, pain, conflicts and misunderstandings be very careful to seek God rather than trying to seek comfort from compassionate people who will listen to your complaints and tales of abuse and will agree with you. This is generally disastrous because it feeds the flesh and strengthens the self life. The result is that “a strong human will” is exercised to regain what is erroneously thought to be lost. The truth is the life and ministry is being refined and we are being weaned away from self to bring us closer to God.

What is needed is to fully surrender to the will of God and certainly not to strengthen the human will to force our way forward. Even though we are not yet firmly established in God, this is the beginning of the inner spiritual way that seeks to unseat the self life from the throne in your heart so that Christ may rule supreme. If this happens, the Kingdom has gained a foot hold in your life and the flesh has lost another foothold.

[DISCOVERY] The blessing, the pleasure, even the enjoyments that we found in God at the beginning are not strong enough to hold us firmly in the day of trial and suffering so that many fall away. It seems from experience that the blessings and joy of past ministry are soon forgotten in time of trial. The “soul life” may go into a state of shock because it cannot find the pleasure and excitement that it easily found before. However, after we have tasted the power and good things of God it is difficult to find pleasure again in worldly and former things.

This is an “intermediate” experience and should be recognized as the path that all are required to travel in their pursuit of God. It will not last forever but it will last until God can gain some new ground in your life. The sooner we surrender and yield to God’s will and His way the sooner we recover to go another step upward in our ascending call. Every step toward God requires a death to self. If we “save our self” we will suffer eternal loss.

If we permit “self” to dictate our direction and action, the danger of turning aside to the emotions and carnal reasoning and other unlawful satisfaction is very great. “Self” will empower and excite the flesh to a visible demonstration. When “self-pity” rules everybody is aware except the person in the struggle.

[The Self Exposed] How do we identify self? It is often seen as my individual views, my feelings, my personal interest, my well being, my ideas are best, absorbed with myself, my ego, who I am and who I think I am, consumed with my hurts, my pain, my suffering, my rejection, I was left out, nobody told me, and on and on.

There is a story that is told about the building committee for a new church building. Two women dominated the other members and insisted on their own plans for church design. One insisted upon a certain entrance with a particular steeple that had a certain size and construction material. The other woman insisted upon a different style entrance with different building materials and a much different steeple. After months of hassle the committee could not reconcile the differences so in order to proceed they agreed to build two entrances. One on each end that met the requirements of each woman. The building became a monument to the “self life”. Since neither of their wills would give in, neither could surrender for the good of all. If God’s will and God’s glory

is central everything else fades away and we cease insisting upon our own self-interest.

[**THE LESSON**] God cannot be found in anything or any place outside of Himself. We should quickly come to the place that we quit seeking for God in ministry or in gifts or in His grace or in His blessings. This is the problem with every form of outward ministry and gifts of power or healing. While gifts of power are not wrong and should be desired by everyone, we should not confuse that with seeking God, Himself, for Himself. Outward ministry is not a substitute for the inward life and inward way of communion with God and should certainly not be our source of spiritual satisfaction and spiritual pleasure.

Outward ministry should be the result or fruit of obedience to the discipline of the spiritual life with God. We minister because it is the will of God and not because it is convenient or the result of our will or our pleasure and satisfaction or for our glory. The anointing to minister should not be confused with an inner life or communion with God.

It is so easy to get centered in the creation and the creature rather than to anchor ourselves into our true center which is the Creator, Himself.

[**THE PROBLEM**] Even if our goal is the mountain top of Mt. Zion we can only advance by traveling through “the valley of the shadow of death”. PSALM 84:5 How blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the highways to Zion! [6] Passing through the valley of Baca, they make it a spring, The early rain also covers it with blessings. [7] **They go from strength to strength, Every one of them appears before God in Zion.**

Baca means “weeping” {the valley of weeping}. The way to Zion is through the valley of weeping. This is identified as covered with blessings. It is also the means of advancing from strength to strength. If our goal is to appear before God in Zion we must travel the highway prepared for us.

Traveling through the valley of the darkness of death is not to destroy us but to put to death the self life and it’s contention with God. Remember, if we had not cried out to God for more of Him, for deliverance from bondages and that we want to intimately know Him, we wouldn’t be in the valley in the first place. We should rejoice because God has answered our prayer.

The picture of Israel in the wilderness is full of examples of the way to Canaan. In Psalms 78, 106 and 107 along with others gives many details of the purpose of God to bring them into their own land and their misunderstanding the way that God had to do it. Because they misunderstood and conferred with men instead of God they complained against Moses and blamed him for their troubles. We do exactly the same! It is not that we don’t want to go but that we don’t like the way God takes us. It doesn’t agree with our concept of how we thought it should be so we resist and complain.

[**THE PLACE OF REST**] In Madam Guyon’s comments on prayer she refers to “the halfway house”, “the inn” and “the traveler”. This is similar to “The Pilgrim Progress” where Bunyon relates the pits and perils along the way. The Halfway house is the place where we finally find rest

from the rigorous journey along the way. She relates this place as halfway to reaching our goal of full communion with God. She speaks of a quiet rest for the soul, for the will, for the emotions and for the intellect. Thoughts at last are at rest and self is left behind or subdued. Our senses, carnal logic and personal feelings are no help in hearing from God. "Myself" is no longer relevant or central and I may enter into rest. We have ceased from our own labors. We have reached the security of "the inn".

I want to use that example to speak of reaching our goal of a life with God with all barriers removed and we fellowship face to face, beholding Him as in a mirror. The halfway house represents a stopping place but not a place to reside permanently. The tendency is to finally enjoy the rest, confuse that with the goal, and cease the upward call. The farther upward we travel the more real and intense the presence of God.

At this intermediate stage of being absent from the tyranny self but not yet present with the Lord and in a state of rest, we still have many barriers between us and the immediate presence of God. When we first come to the Lord and we begin our travel toward the throne and presence of God, we discover we have erected many barriers that are normally impassable in our prayer time. We find we may advance a little but an inward invisible barrier prevents us from going farther in our prayer time. After a while we may accept that "distance" as normal and resign ourselves to this far and no farther. This is a great mistake because it will limit our forward advance.

This same type of "glass ceiling" will apply to praise and worship. We come to a "barrier" between us and the manifested presence of God and soon accept that limitation as the normal. We then think our worship and praise is acceptable because we have reached that "limit". To break through the "accepted limit" in prayer, praise or worship requires more than just a struggle, it requires the revelation that there is no limit set by God. That this is a false limit that we have accepted just because we have reached it time and time again.

[IDENTIFYING THE BARRIERS] We have already identified self as a barrier but sin is a very high and powerful barrier. Unforgiveness is another impossible barrier. Resentment, bitterness, complaining, lying, faithlessness, slothfulness, lack of discipline, lack of devotion and hypocrisy are others. Our will standing against the will of God is very strong and represents an impassable barrier. Of course each person has their own barriers and there is no exact pattern.

Every "barrier" represents a challenge for God to remove and He will work until we ask Him to cease. Even after we close the door and say that is enough, He will stand at the door and knock. However, He will not force the door and will finally submit to our free will and leave us alone.

We each one will discern that "being converted" to a life with God is a slow and painful process and one that we can't accomplish on our own by our own cleverness. This process requires that God be continually at work in us both to will and to do His good pleasure. The last stronghold of "self" is "our will" standing against God's will. Even though we are not conscious that our will is against God's will that is the very nature of "self" and is inherent within each one of us. We were born with this "barrier" within us. It is the result of the fall and was inherited from the first Adam.

[**REFLECTIONS**] In the outward life it is difficult to even recognize “self” as the motivator and power of our Christian life and it seems impossible to avoid the “manifestation of self”. In the very beginning what is called “self reflections” can be helpful (if they are honest) but are a barrier to the inward life with God. As we begin to make the transition from self to God, self reflections are a great hindrance because they just direct us back to self again. Self reflections generally lead us to self-pity in the time of trials.

Since we all begin our spiritual walk with “self-direction” and “self-motivation” it leaves us dependent upon self to lead us to a relationship with God. Self-motivation generally has it’s goal upon some reward or advancement or self-glory. Maybe an acknowledgment from others of being a spiritual person. Some are motivated by some future glory but the source is still “self”

This is why ,I believe, that God must bring us to the fuller experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He must lead us rather than self-interest. Immediately following the transition from self-leading to the Holy Spirit leading, He will bring us to the consecration offering to begin the destruction of the self focus. Striving in the flesh to reach a spiritual life with God is completely fruitless and hopeless. Consecration cannot be the “self” (through the flesh) striving to advance in God but true consecration must be a total surrender and allowing God to draw us to another level of relationship where God is King and not king self.

To review the pattern of the Tabernacle as a type of our approach unto God is very helpful at this point.

[**GOAL REVEALED**] The goal of the Tabernacle is the Most Holy Place, the throne of God, the glory of God and the presence of God. The perception is to pass from self to God. The goal is to be lost in God, in His love, in His glory, in His person so that He is all in all and that He comes to have the preeminence in all things. That is about the only conclusion we can derive from the awesomeness of His manifested Glory in the Holy of Holies. Of course the “self” will emphasize “the throne and ruling with Him”. Self says “I am going to Mt. Zion”! The problem is “the self” would be burnt up in the consuming fire. “Self” will be concerned with losing it’s identity if we are lost in God and have become one with Him. However, in the manifested presence and glory of God all that we could be aware of is God, Himself. We wouldn’t be concerned with hair, shoes, name, fame or our reputation in His presence. All attention will be focused upon Him. Even our memory of the former life would be erased by the glory of His presence and everything else will fade from importance.

[**HOW DO WE PROCEED?**] While the process seems to be so complex it cannot be too complicated or difficult because many will make the trip from self to God and oneness with Him. My thesis is that the forerunner of the Holy of Holies experience is this intimate relationship with God that is developed by prayer and fellowship. In this relationship God deals with the self life and thereby the flesh and begins to develop the spirit of man. Overcoming the self-life must begin by overcoming the self-will of each of us. The Consecration Offering is where this process begins but it must come to maturity at the Altar of Incense. Since the veil between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place is now torn, the closest we can come to His presence at this point is the Altar of Incense. When the New Jerusalem is finally finished the bond-servants [the love slaves]

will see His face and rule with Him forever.

The Consecration Offering is meant to be so completely given that it is called “the whole burnt offering”. Until offences and mistreatment occurs in our life we won’t see all that the Consecration Offering means. For example the whole burnt offering means there is “nothing” left. Even though we have made every effort to forgive the offences, the memory still remains. God says that when He forgives He no longer has memory of the offence because it is cast into the deepest sea. Ridding ourselves of the memory of the offence is nearly impossible to achieve in our own effort.

In the picture of the Consecration Offering the head and all that is in it is totally consumed so that no memory exists. That is the ideal but the actual is that we have a bad time forgetting. This means that ALL is not yet consumed in the fire of His love. If we have truly made the Consecration Offering then we may ask God to consume even the memory of the offence and He is faithful to do it. Since this fire is a type of His love, as we are touched by His love, we not only are able to forget but we also advance in manifesting His love. If we have truly consecrated ALL to God we will find that every other defect can be solved in this same way. Another example is that if we are hindered by our logic and intellect in studying and understanding the scriptures we may ask God to consume them in the fire of His love. The “self-life” seems more difficult to deal with than certain defects. It appears that it must be crucified rather than consumed. Consumed may be easier and quicker and more fun.

[**CONSECRATION**] DEUT 15:16] "And it shall come about if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you,' **because he loves you and your household**, since he fares well with you; [17] then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever.

Consecration is such a personal and intimate expression of our love for God and not just some mechanical thing we do because it is required or because we hear about someone doing it. Consecration as a “love slave” is not something that God is demanding and God will certainly release us from any feeling of obligation. In fact consecration because of guilt, or obligation is not consecration at all but may be just a religious exercise that produces nothing.

I think there are relatively few who begin this life that actually consecrate themselves to God out of a genuine love for Him and His household. Few consecrate themselves with no reservations or areas of their life that are not withheld. They may think they have made a “full consecration” until God begins to invade certain areas of their life that are withheld.

When Doris and I consecrated ourselves to God and His will in 1970 we did it out of fear and a sense of this is what we must do. We felt compulsion because of the verses in Hebrews that says “Today if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts as they did in the day of provocation” and “today is the day of salvation”. We understood that God was requiring full consecration that very day and He was not waiting for tomorrow. Our consecration was certainly not out of love for Him or because we “knew Him” or because of His great love and divine character. We hardly knew who He was. Still, from that very day onward we know that was the watershed of our

beginning experience and set the course of our life. Four others heard the same thing we heard that day but decided to wait and our paths definitely took different routes. Ever since that day God has been busy trying to break down more barriers in our lives and drawing us to Himself. For years we didn't understand and resisted about everything that He was trying to do to bring us to Himself.

Very few begin their consecration out of love from a pure heart but most begin out of a desire to excel, advance beyond their brethren, gain spiritual advantage or ascend to a higher place in the Kingdom. Some actually "consecrate" because of a doctrine about Zion. This is a manifestation of the self life and flesh but God still seems to permit it because He knows how He will deal with this carnality and personal ambition. Even by this error of counterfeit consecration God may grant public ministry and obvious "success". However, the fire is coming to purify the emotions, the religious nature, the personal ambitions, and the pride of ministry. We may wonder at the "minister and his special suffering" and not understand that he is suffering out of his own carnality and selfish motives but God is taking him on the pathway to perfection. If he survives and overcomes he will be perfected in love for God and for others.

1 JOHN 4:10] In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. [12] No one has beheld God at any time; **if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.**

1 JOHN 4:16] And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and **the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.** [17] ***By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment;***

Coming to perfection in love { Agape } is not an activity of the flesh but is an inner working of God in our lives by His abiding presence. His abiding presence is identified as "Love", Agape. Our actual inner life with God is the source of this "Love" and is the method that God uses to "perfect us in Love". The "outer life of self" has no hope of ever being perfected in Love and therefore can have no confidence in the day of Judgment. Those who insist upon strengthening "the outer life of self" will shrink away from Him at His appearing.

1 JOHN 2:28] And now, little children, **abide in Him**, so that when He appears, **we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.**

[**CONCLUSION**] Since God has created us in His own image and likeness He had to give us free will and an independence to choose the same as He has. Since we have "free will" we have erected many, many barriers in the path of God's work in us and between us and God . Each of these barriers create a separation between us and God. To fully abide in Him and He in us these barriers must come down. True consecration is our permission, acceptance, and our desire to have every one of these barriers removed. We can't do it so we commit ourselves into the hands of our faithful creator to complete the work.

In full consecration God receives us as His own property that He has purchased for a price at

Calvary. We become His property voluntarily. Therefore, He is obligated to perfect us in His own Love, Agape. He cannot leave us like we were so He begins to reveal our defects, flaws and imperfections. This tests our consecration to see if it was real and we are really serious about coming to perfection in Love. As God reveals the defects we are permitted to ask God to remove them, destroy them, or burn them up in the fire of His Love or anyway He chooses just so they are gone.

As each barrier is consumed, new light breaks in upon the inner man and new barriers are revealed. At the same time new grace and desire for a closer walk is generated and we willingly offer God more access to destroy more barriers and more light breaks through. The process continues drawing us closer to being perfected in Love and creating in us a greater confidence for the day of judgement.

However, the time that we receive more light but reject it by our free will, the work of God will yield to our free will. Every barrier that we permit to be removed between us and God directs our focus and attention more upon Him and less upon us. At the same time His subjective work in us increases and He empties out that which is not like Himself. As He empties He also fills with Himself so that we are enlarged, perfected and experience more of the fulness of God. That fulness is Love and by His Love we are perfected in Love.

This process may be seen as harsh, desolation, emptiness, loneliness, isolation and destruction. It is to the self life and old nature. The harshness of this inner work is simply because of the depth of the impurities and the stains left there by the flesh. If we understood the meticulous cleansing of the inner sanctuary in the Tabernacle before the glory of His presence could fill the Holy of Holies we would understand the necessity of the inner work of God in our life.

HOS 6:1 "Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. [2] "He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day That we may live before Him. [3] "So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth."

In order to truly experience the resurrection life of Christ we must first experience the self life being put to death. This is God's work to wound and tear the self life from us. One purpose of the "rain" is to wash, cleanse and purify. God comes to us as the rain. We will be revived in two days and then raised up to live before Him on the third day. This "trial" will not last forever and resurrection life is on the way to raise us up. It is in this way that we press on to know the Lord. His work is as certain as the sun rise and we can give ourselves into the hands of a faithful creator in full consecration for Him to complete the work for the day of Christ.

The alternative is to shrink back from Him at His coming.