

A Life Consecrated To God

By E. A. Johnston

sermonaudio.com

Preached On: Friday, November 7, 2014

Ambassadors For Christ Intl-USA

1335 Terrell Mill Road
Bldg 1462, Suite 100
Marietta, GA 30067

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/9225

I love the story about D. L. Moody about how in 1872 he traveled to England to study and he met a man named Henry Barley said to the young evangelist, "Moody, the world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to him." Moody walked away and muttered beneath his breath, "By God's grace, I will be that man," and those words so altered D. L. Moody's life that he said of that occasion, "Those were the words sent to my soul from the living God as I crossed the Atlantic. The boards of the deck were engraved with them and when I reached Chicago, the very paving stones seemed marked with them. The world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to him." And when you study the life of D. L. Moody, you see an unworldly man who was so fully consecrated to God that he lived in the light of eternity and it was said of Moody that when he was preaching in Glasgow Scotland beneath the sky in the botanic gardens to 30,000 people, this was recorded by a bystander who heard him, "The numbers that attended are not the most remarkable feature, it is the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, the solemn awe, the prayerful believing, expectant spirit, the anxious inquiry of unsaved souls and the longing of believers to grow more like Christ. All this is of the grace of God."

Friends, when I study the life of D. L. Moody, I see a life consecrated to God and that's the title of my message this evening, "A Life Consecrated to God," for I believe that that's the missing ingredient in many of our pulpits today. We have men, educated men, personable men, good men, who make a good argument to become a Christian and decide for Christ but they are men speaking to men and trying to win them over with an argument for God. But when I study the lives of men whom God has used in former times to bring him glory, I see men who had power in the pulpit and anointing on their life because they were men who were consecrated to God in a holy walk with him.

This evening friends, I want us to look at how God builds a man to be a preacher for him and my text is found in the book of 2 Kings 4. You may turn in your Bibles there now. We will be in verses 8 and 9. Here is a picture of a true servant of God in the life of Elisha. Let me read it to us now and may the Spirit of God attend the reading of his holy word.

"And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. And she said unto her

husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually."

The words that stick out in my mind from this passage more than any other are the words "I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually." Oh friends, how we desperately need men like that in our pulpits today. We need humble men who live on their knees in a close intimate walk with the Ancient of Days. When I think of this story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman, I think of my late homiletical mentor Dr. Stephen F. Olford for he was a man with a touch of heaven upon his life. He had a mantle of authority on him and a God-consciousness about him to such a degree that when he preached, you saw the realities of eternity and were moved into action by his anointed preaching.

I'll never forget a story about Stephen Olford that Manley Beasley related one day. He said that Stephen Olford was due to preach at a church in Dallas, Texas for a friend of his and the pastor of that church called in a young seminary intern and asked him to go to the airport to pick up Dr. Olford. The young man asked, "Well, how will I recognize him? Do you have a photo of him?" The pastor replied, "No need for that, you just go to the airport terminal and wait for the passengers to get off the plane and look for a man who has God all over him. That will be Stephen Olford." And the seminary student did just that. He waited at the airport terminal while the passengers came up the walkway and when he saw Dr. Olford, he recognized him immediately as the man who had God all over him.

The number one pursuit in Stephen Olford's ministry was not the salvation of souls, that was secondary. The number one objective in Dr. Olford's life was the pursuit of holiness unto God. In fact, he kept a framed plaque on the wall of his study of the words of his hero, Robert Murray M'Cheyne which read, "Lord, make me as holy as a saved sinner can be." That was Dr. Olford's life motto, friends, and it should be ours as well. We want to see results when we preach so we rehearse our sermons over and over and work ourselves up with the most enthusiasm we can muster and we animate ourselves in the pulpit to do our level best to move people to God but not much happens most of the time because it is man speaking to man. But when there is a touch of God on a man's life through his consecrated service to God, then a certain solemnity will accompany his preaching and his prayers. There will be a God consciousness about him because he will be like Elisha in our passage tonight, where the Shunammite woman declares to her husband, "I perceive that this is a holy man of God which passeth by."

I want us to see, friends, how all this applies and how God builds a man to serve him, how God makes a preacher and there are four aspects I would like to mention for us this evening.

1. First God prepares a man to serve him.
2. Then God calls a man into service for him.
3. Then God sets that man apart in consecration to him.

4. Lastly, then God will use that man as a means of blessing to his generation and to bring him glory.

Let us examine this first aspect of how God first prepares a man as seen in the life of Moses. Turn in your Bibles, if you will, to the book of Exodus 3, beginning in verse 1. Here now is the striking passage from the word of God, "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb." I will pause there. Here is Moses, the mighty Moses trained in the best schools of Egypt and now he is a lowly shepherd on the backside of the desert and he lives that kind of existence for the next 40 years of his life. I like what F. J. Huegel says about Moses. He said, "For 40 years on the lonely slopes of Midian, the fiery Moses was schooled. There were graves, if I may so speak, scattered all over the mountainside where hope after hope was buried until at last self went down in utter annihilation." I like that. You see friends, God had to keep Moses 40 years on the backside of the desert as he walked behind stinky and smelly sheep because Moses had 40 years of Egypt in him that had to be burned out of him and buried in those lonely slopes of Midian. This was the emptying of Moses in his preparation to be the leader and deliverer of the people of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt.

So God was preparing Moses during this time. Then after God had prepared his servant, it is then that he reveals himself to Moses at the burning bush and gives him his marching orders which is seen in verse 10 of this passage. "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt." I was sitting with Stephen Olford in his study one day and he related a story to me about this very thing. He said that he was asked by a local pastor to travel out of town and visit an up-and-coming new preacher who was making some noise at a certain Baptist Church. Stephen Olford agreed to go and hear this young man preach. After the meeting, the pastor was driving Dr. Olford back to Memphis and he asked him, "Well, what did you think of this young preacher?" To which Dr. Olford replied, "Yes, a remarkable young man. Quite remarkable. But he hasn't suffered enough yet." And when I see men whom God has used in former times as evangelists, I see men who passed through valleys of great suffering. George Whitefield had to suffer the death of his son. Rolfe Barnett had to suffer the death of his daughter. Adrian Rogers had to suffer the death of his son. F. J. Huegel had to suffer the death of his daughter. Adoniram Judson buried several children and two wives on the mission field. I could go on and on, friends, for the list is very long of these suffering saints whom God allowed to pass beneath his rod in preparing them for service to him.

So friends, we see this first aspect of how God prepares a man to serve him. Secondly, we see then how God calls a man into service for him. There has to be a call of God on a person's life to ministry. Allow me to explain. I was being interviewed on a Christian radio program and the host asked me how I became an evangelist and I answered her that I had received a clear call from God on my life to ministry and she related to me and her radio listeners that many years ago she had a job where she had to contact over 1,000 pastors and interview them and ask them how they came to be a pastor. She said that every single one of them had a reason such as, "Well, I'm a good speaker and it comes

natural to me to address a group of people." Or, "I like to be in front of people and encourage them," and so on. This radio host remarked that out of those 1,000 pastors whom she interviewed, only one man, a black pastor, said that he was in ministry because God had called him into it. One out of 1,000 and I fear, friends, that's the trouble with many of our churches today. We have men in the pulpits who are educated, they are good speakers and communicators, they have winning personalities but they have no power from on high because they have no call of God on their life and no smile of heaven upon their ministry. I'll never forget speaking to a pastor who I met at a conference one time. I asked him how he became a pastor and this is what he told me. He said, "Well, I was a math teacher for a number of years but I grew tired of it. Then I was an assistant to an electrical engineer but I got fired from that job. Then I did this job and that job but they didn't work out too well so I thought I'd tried to be a pastor and see how that went." I walked away from that conversation saying to myself how I pitied the congregation who was stuck with a man like that for a shepherd. So there must be a call from God on a person's life for service.

Next, then God sets that man apart in consecration to him and this, friends, is where many go astray in ministry. You cannot have one foot in the world and one foot with God. You cannot have a divided heart, friend. You cannot serve God partially and expect power from him on your ministry. You must be like D. L. Moody and come to the place in your life where you can say, "The world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to him," and then go out and be that man, go out and be that woman. In the Old Testament, the articles used by the priest and the offerings were set apart, were consecrated to God for his use and in our service to the King, we must be set apart for his use as well. We must pursue lives of holiness and become less infatuated with this world and more focused on the other world which is eternity and the souls who are going there, either to heaven or to hell. I could promise you this, friends, if there was such a thing as television in D. L. Moody's day, he never would have owned one but we'll sit in front of that TV and watch raunchy programs until our eyes grow as big as saucers and our brains the size of a pea. When the prophet Elisha passed into a village, you knew instantly he was a man of God. How desperately we need men in our pulpits who have an intimate walk with God through a vital prayer life with Jesus.

Listen friends, the greatest need in our land today is a prophet, a man sent from God, God's man who will stand in the gap between heaven and earth, between mortal man and Almighty God. A holy man who is so wholly sold out to God, so intoxicated with Christ and so consumed with eternity that his very footprints leave a smoky trail of the lingering fire of God. A man whose desperate life of prayer has left fingerprints on the horns of the altar of glory. A man whose emboldened faith and Enoch-like walk with God moves mountains of resistance and proves that the God of the Bible is alive and interested in the most minute requests of men. God will always raise up an Elisha whose prayers impact a sleeping nation. The church in each generation has had individuals who lived upon their knees, whose prayers reached heaven with a holy violence. India had her praying Hyde. China her Hudson Taylor. England her Puritans. Scotland her Covenanters. America her fiery E. M. Bounds. Voices which gained the attention of the throne room, startled angels and shook the gates of hell, making even the demons quake and tremble with their

desperate prayers. Oh friends, how God will use a life fully consecrated to him. He will not tolerate sin in the life of a believer even if we will. He will set us aside until we are consecrated vessels for him.

I remember reading what the saintly F. B. Meyer said about his own life regarding this very thing. At the time, he was a young pastor in England. He was sitting at his desk in his study and he reached into a drawer to get a pen but when he he picked it up it leaked and got ink on his hand and he recalled how he had previously put that pen away in that drawer because it had gotten his hand dirty. Then in the stillness of the room, a still small voice spoke to him and said, "You are that pen and I will not use you as long as you sin and make my hands dirty. I will set you aside until you return to me." That story, friends, has always sent shivers down my spine and it should to each of us if we desire to be useful to God. God is holy, he must have holy servants, fully consecrated to him.

Evan Roberts of the Welsh Revival was a man consecrated to God. He would often tell his hearers, "Is there any sin in your past that you have not confessed to God? Is there anything in your life that is doubtful?" And it is there, friends, in the doubtful things over lives where we besmirch God's dignity by claiming we're his followers but not keeping his commands. God says, "Be ye holy for I am holy," and we must, friends, we must.

Lastly, when all these previous aspects are made a reality in our lives, then God will use that man as a means of blessing to his generation and to bring him glory. What an honor to be a means of blessing to a generation. What an honor to bring God glory, friends. I like the words of the Chinese evangelist, Watchmen Nee, who wrote, "Before the Holy Spirit can take full charge over a person, there must first be the complete committal of his flesh to the cross. Let us pray that we may know what the flesh exactly is and how it must be crucified." Oh how true that is, friends. The doctrine of the cross in the life of a believer is seldom ever preached today. It's a foreign subject.

Well, I began this message by quoting Stephen Olford and I will finish this message this evening with his words again for we can learn much from his consecrated life unto God. He conveyed the following statement to me one time. He said, "God can only bless with the anointing of his Spirit those who pursue a life of holiness." I'll never forget his words and I will close this message, friends, with a prayer that Dr. Olford often prayed before he went into the pulpit for it reveals the secret of his consecrated life unto God and it's what we've been talking about tonight, a life consecrated to God. Here now is Dr. Olford's vital prayer and may it be ours as well: Anoint me with your Spirit, Lord, for this strategic hour that I might preach your holy Word with consecrated power.