

The Fully Consecrated Life

Text: Isaiah 26:1-8

In 1872 Henry Varley, a British revivalist, spoke these words to the great American evangelist, D. L. Moody, “Moody, the world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to him.” In 1873, a year later, D.L. Moody reminded Henry Varley of those words. On that occasion, Moody said, “Ah, those were the words sent to my soul, through you, from the Living God. As I crossed the wide Atlantic, the boards of the deck of the vessel were engraved with them, and when I reached Chicago, the very paving stones seemed marked with ‘Moody, the world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to him.’ Under the power of those words I have come back to England, and I felt that I must not let more time pass until I let you know how God had used your words to my inmost soul.” Moody, after meditating on those words, said, “By God’s help, I aim to be that man.”

Not long ago, I was in a store taking care of some phone business. I found out the young man behind the counter was from Cameroon and he was a Christian. Before my business was complete another young man from Cameroon came into the store and he was a minister. As we talked, I mentioned our missionaries to Africa. Then the young men inquired, “Why does America send so many missionaries all over Africa, but not to Cameroon? We often meet missionaries to Nigeria or Uganda, but not to our country.” I didn’t really have an answer to that question. This does not mean there were not missionaries in Cameroon; it simply means these were young men who loved their country and were perplexed as to why they had not met anyone carrying the Great Commission to their homeland. I tied this desire of these young men to a story I read in a book by John Piper entitled *Don’t Waste Your Life*. He said, “In April 2000 Ruby Eliason and Laura Edwards were killed in Cameroon, West Africa. Ruby was over eighty. Single all her life, she poured it out for one great thing: to make Jesus Christ known among the unreached, the poor, and the sick. Laura was a widow, a medical doctor, pushing eighty years old, and serving at Ruby’s side in Cameroon. The brakes failed, the car went over a cliff, and they were both killed instantly. I asked my congregation: Was this a tragedy? Two lives, driven by one great passion, namely to be spent in unheralded service to the perishing poor for the glory of Jesus Christ – even two decades after most of their American counterparts had retired to throw away their lives on trifles. No, that is not a tragedy. That is a glory. Their lives were not wasted. And these lives were not lost.” Mark 8:35: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.”

Then Piper makes a comparison: “I will tell you what a tragedy is. I will show you how to waste your life. Consider a story from the February 1998 Reader’s Digest, which tells about a couple who ‘took early retirement from their jobs in the Northeast five years ago when he was 59 and she was 51. Now they live in Punta Gorda, Florida, where they cruise on their 30-foot trawler, play softball and collect shells.’ At first, I read it and I thought it might be a joke. A spoof on the American Dream. But it wasn’t. Tragically, this was the dream:

Come to the end of your life - your one and only precious, God-given life - and let the last great work of your life, before you give an account to your Creator, be this: playing softball and collecting shells. Picture them before Christ at the great day judgment: 'Look, Lord, See my shells.' That is a tragedy. And the people today are spending billions of dollars to persuade you to embrace that dream. Over against that, I put my protest: Don't buy it. Don't waste your life."

Two thoughts are in my mind. Young men from Cameroon, begging for missionaries to come to their needy land. Who will take the place of Ruby and Laura, who were doing a great work for Christ? Secondly, I think about Pastor Jay Shepherd who has pastored the Tri-City Baptist Church in Punta Gorda, Florida. He and his dear wife, Trina are the happy parents of Savannah, Trey, Katelynn, Andrew, Abigail, Josiah, Eston, Sadie, Candance and Adelyn. All in church; all serving God. That is a fine collection of ten children! We have had the privilege of having Jay and Trina for a couple of our Marriage Retreats. Brother Jay did a wonderful job. I have also had the privilege of preaching for him at Tri-City and I have been a first hand witness of seeing souls saved and returning to see those who are saved disciplined. The contrast down in Punta Gorda is astonishing. A retired couple collecting shells. A godly family collecting souls for Christ!

This rather lengthy introduction brings us to our test. Isaiah 26 prophetically speaks of the day when the government of God will rule and reign on earth, and Christ, the Son of David, will sit upon the throne in Jerusalem and peace will be throughout the world. Although the government of God has not yet come upon the world, we can enjoy the government of God in Christ's Church, our homes and also when a nation as a whole turns toward God as illustrated in Psalm 33:12: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." What matters to God should matter to us. To live in His will is to make much of this life the Lord has given us. To live outside His will is to waste your life. Let us invest our life instead of wasting our life.

1. THE FULLY CONSECRATED LIFE IS A PEACEFUL LIFE.

Isaiah 26:3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Many times we speak in exaggeration when we say something is perfect. But when it comes to living a life totally dedicated to God, it is not exaggerating to speak of this as the closest to a perfect place on this side of eternity.

2. THE FULLY CONSECRATED LIFE IS ONE OF UNCONDITIONAL TRUST.

Isaiah 26:4: "Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:" One of the best examples of this is found in these words by the three Hebrew children just before they were cast into the burning fiery furnace. Daniel 3:17, 18: "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

The attitude of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is that God is able to deliver them from the furnace, but if He does not deliver, their trust will not falter. Too many times we pray and seek God’s face and we present our situation to Him and if He does not answer our prayer the way we want Him to, we allow our trust to erode. Let us trust God no matter what.

3. THE FULLY CONSECRATED LIFE IS ONE THAT MAGNIFIES GOD.

Isaiah 26:8: “Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.”

One can magnify with a microscope or with a telescope. When we magnify with a microscope, we make something very small appear very big. On the other hand, when we magnify with a telescope we can see something that is unimaginably great to appear as it really is. The Hubble space telescope can reveal magnificent galaxies, although pinprick in size to our naked eyes, we get a glimpse through the telescope of their far greater magnitude.

When we make our problems big, our perception of God is too small. When we serve a God who is great in our eyes our problems become small. Exodus 15:11: “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” Psalm 71:19: “Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!” Micah 7:18: “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.” Shortly before Moody’s death he was reported to have turned to his boys who were at his bedside and said, “If God be your partner, make your plans large.” And as Moody neared the end, he is also reported to have said the words Varley said to him almost 30 years earlier, “The world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to him.” Why don’t you, by the grace of God, determine to be that man or woman!

-Pastor Pope-