

Immersion Discourse
Bro. George Tabac 10-1-2000

Sr. / Br. _____,

I'm sure I speak for **all your brethren**, not only those in this room, but those through out the earth and beyond the veil, as well as our Lord Jesus and our Heavenly Father, when we all unitedly say to you, "We rejoice in your willingness to offer your self in consecration, to a life of dedicated service to God above all else."

It truly is the most momentous decision you will ever make.

You have started on a journey that will take you through many varied experiences.

It is a narrow way, that will be quite difficult at times, but be assured your every experience will be directed or permitted and overruled by the hand of your loving heavenly father, who knows exactly what is best to help you develop the height of character that he knows you are capable of attaining.

And with each step our Lord will be at your side, helping you, nudging you, encouraging you, and on occasion as needed chastening you, but ever bear in mind every experience permitted, is an act of love.

But by far you will find your life will be filled to overflowing with blessings.

Even as Jesus promised, in Mt 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

And as God promised in Mal. 3:10 Prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it*.

Not of a material kind, but of the spirit. A revival of spiritual health energy, vigor, joy, and an inner peace that comes when you know you are doing what pleases your heavenly father.

Let's consider for a few moments **why** our heavenly Father instituted Baptism.

The first reason is Baptism is a beautiful symbol.

The meaning of the Greek word Baptizo is to bury, immerse, cover up, submerge.

We read in Rom. 6:3-6

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection:

From this we see how Baptism is a very appropriate symbol of consecration. When we are lowered backwards into the water it's portraying how our old wills are being put to death. We are buried in death with Christ.

That is we vow to strive to no longer have a will of our own, our fallen fleshly will is symbolically buried, and we then rise out of the water to walk in newness of life, doing now the will of Christ.

And in the final picture, if we faithfully fulfill the sacrifice of our fleshly will, being planted in the likeness of our Lord's death, then we will also be raised immortal, being raised in the likeness of our Lord's resurrection.

Thus the symbol of immersion helps to form a lasting impression on your mind of the vows that you made to no longer follow a will of your own, but only that of Christ's.

The second reason God instituted baptism, is that it affords a humble opportunity to openly indicate to others what has taken place in our hearts, that we have made a consecration to bury our fleshly wills, to doing God's will.

It's always good to outwardly express to others any vow or mental determination of what we are going to strive to attain to. In so doing, it becomes a reinforcement to our own goal, and by notifying your brethren of our vow, we can all rejoice together and endeavor to help and encourage one another along the narrow way as fellow members of the body of Christ.

Another reason we believe God instituted baptism, is the immersion service itself gives us all an opportunity to reflect upon some of the principals our Father gave us, of what our consecrated lives should consist of.

In turn it causes those of us who have made a consecration in the past, to reflect back on our vows. Thus in our service this morning when we use the words you and yours in encouraging our candidates, may each of us envision the day we sat in the first row and may we apply the words to ourselves, may they cause us to reflect on the promises we made.

May we look inward to examine how well we were doing, where we have come short, how can we do better, and to renew our determination to fulfill our consecrations more fully.

In addition for those of you the Lord may be calling and are now counting the cost, may this service help you further reflect and weigh carefully the principals of the invitation God has placed before you.

So for a few moments this morning may we all consider together a few of the principals that govern those who are striving to do God's will.

Sr. / Br. _____

This step of consecration that you have made **is the beginning** of a great sanctifying work before you, of subduing, sacrificing, conquering, and ruling self.

Gal. 5:22-25 (NAS) shows us how it involves the development of our entire character.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

Thus it is a great transformation work!

However, it should not only affect your characters, your minds, but it will involve your hands, your eyes, your ears, your tongues, your all, that you may be fully and completely set apart from the world, to the glory of God and his service.

You have entered a race, a race you need to run as if our very life was dependant upon it, - FOR IT DOES!

As you run cast aside every weight that might possibly hinder you.

Remember the words of Paul “THIS ONE THING I DO” Every thing else in your life must take secondary place to this most important decision you have made.

You must run and strive with every fiber of your being, what you are symbolizing this day.

Don't ever be satisfied with averageness. You must ever strive to do the very best you can. Very few who are satisfied with just average spirituality, will ever make their calling and election sure.

From time to time remember the Quote of Bro. Russell from Volume 6 page 127 speaking of the great company when he said,

The Great Company are not faithful enough to Court Sacrifice In His Service.

The thought of courting sacrifice refers to a deep seated longing desire to fully and completely sacrifice our lives in His Service.

We shouldn't be satisfied in just waiting until someone asks us for help to assist in some activity, BUT we believe our Lord is pleased to see his children looking, investigating, searching out, or at times even creating means and ways to further glorify our heavenly Father's name and serving his people.

For sacrificial service really is an expression of ones love, it's an outward evidence of the love in ones heart for the Lord and what he has done for us, and to show how truly with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, we want to spend and be spent in his service.

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“The little flock will serve the Lord with such delight that they will scarcely know how to cease their efforts.

May it be your joy, to serve the Lord with such delight, that you will scarcely know how to cease your efforts.

As in so many things in life we want to always reach for the highest ideal. But at the same time realize we're not perfect. There will be times we will slip, we will come short, we will fail, from achieving our hearts sincere desire. We all do at times. We want so much to do better.

When it happens, and it will, please don't become overly discouraged. It's possible for one to become so despondent with themselves that they are almost unable to function.

Discouragement is one of the tools Satan uses most to try to dishearten God's people. He wants to get them to feel there's no use trying any more. He may suggest you'll never make the goal, your just not good enough.

Don't you believe it. God would never call you if you did not have the basic character quality that he desires for his royal diadem.

Remember Ps 103:14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

Our Father is full of compassion. Our testing is not to see whether we are perfect according to the flesh, but according to the heart.

The moment you recognize you have sinned or come short in some manner, may we instantly come to the father to pray for his forgiveness. Tell him how sorry you are, pray for more of the Holy Spirit to help you to overcome your weakness. Make amends if need be for your mistake.

But above all **believe** the Fathers word when he says in "1Jo 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Believe it! Don't doubt, wondering if it applies to you! It does! Believe it! He will forgive! He will cleanse us from **ALL, ALL**, unrighteousness.

Pick yourself up, and go forward, don't keep looking back and possibly brow beating yourself for past sins. They are over and done with, learn the lesson and strive ever harder to improve, and go on.

As you progress along the narrow way, ever strive to live your life free from all fear and anxiety.

Always remember that you are the object of God's special care. Our heavenly father has promised to direct and overrule every aspect of your lives.

He has promised that not even a hair of your heads can fall to the ground without his being aware of it.

He has promised that all things, **ALL THINGS**, will work together for your good.

He has promised that he will never leave you or forsake you.

He has promised that your guardian angel will always at your side less you cast your foot against a stone.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, could ever happen to you without the heavenly fathers knowledge and permission. And he will only permit that which will be for your best eternal welfare.

In other words our father has given us every possible assurance of his great love and his tender care.

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He has promised your trials will be custom made, exactly what would be best to help crystallize your characters.

Therefore they are literally worth millions, may you never waste any of them, may you never have fear or be anxious over them, may you acquiesce to them, may you be rightly exercised by them.

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In Ps 32:8 God gives us a precious promise, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

What a promise, our heavenly father, the God of all the universe promises to be your instructor, teacher, and guide, to show you the way you should walk.

How does he do that? Through several ways.

Above all it's through his written word. Thus strive to develop an absolute delight in studying it.

Study it the first thing in the morning, or study it the last thing at night, study it during your lunch, study it with a few friends, attend study meetings. When ever where ever, study it's principals until they become a very part of you. Meditate on it every day until it becomes second nature in every decision of life to reflect on what would God have you to do.

Another way in which God leads us, is through that wonderful quality God placed within each of us we call conscience. It's acts like a scale on which we weigh all the various things presented to our judgment, to ascertain the RIGHT OR WRONG, the JUSTICE OR INJUSTICE, the TRUTH OR THE FALSITY of a matter.

This scale however could be very lenient or very stringent, all depending on how our New Creature regulates it.

As you day by day grow as a New Creature strive to ever make it more stringent. Fight the inclination of the flesh which will repeatedly suggest excuses to make it more lenient. Only your New Creature can regulate it, no one else. Do it faithfully!

On reprint page 3777 Bro. Russell gives us a gem thought.

"To the enlightened Christian, guided in judgment by God's revelation the Bible, the voice of conscience becomes really the voice of God, and obedience to it is imperative."

The voice of conscience becomes really the voice of God. What is the voice of conscience? How does it speak to us? Do we hear a voice of some kind?

No! Most often it's through an uneasy feeling we call guilt.

Guilt feelings are an effect produced by conscience that disturbs our mental peace of mind, whenever we start heading in a direction that conscience disapproved.

Guilt, therefore just like physical pain is for the purpose of being a warning sign, a danger flag waving as it were. Look upon it as the voice of God telling you that you are doing or about to do something that if you don't stop will bring injury to your spiritual life.

If we are about to do something that will be neglecting the sacrificial aspect of our covenant and be pampering the flesh, we will feel it.

If we are about to spend far more money on a car, furniture, a home or what have you, than what would be appropriate for a consecrated sacrificial life, - we will feel it.

If we are in the process of doing something that is more or less a waste of time, we will feel it.

If we are entertaining an unholy, unjust, or impure thought we will feel it even stronger.

But for whatever, or whenever, whether it's minor or major, we must come to recognize this uneasy guilt feeling for what it is, **A RED WARNING FLAG WAVED BY OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.**

Do heed the warning. Try to stop immediately doing what ever precipitated the feeling. Come to God in prayer to beseech his help and strength to overcome the weakness that brought it about.

A third way in which God will lead you is through his overruling providences.

How thankful we are to know that God's overruling providences are with us every moment of the day overruling countless experiences for our highest welfare.

However providences in themselves are **NOT** primarily the means God uses to **INSTRUCT** us, regarding what his will is for us.

As Bro. Russell brings out in reprint 2240:

"We believe in divine providence, but believe that they are means for the bringing of God's people into a condition where they can be taught of God FROM HIS WORD, AND THAT PROVIDENCES DO NOT SUPPLANT God's written word."

For this reason we would suggest never make a decision, on **ONLY** what appears to be an overruling of God's providence.

Let's consider a hypothetical decision we have to make. Should we take the left path or the right. We are weighing the matter when suddenly, a door opens to the left path or a seeming providential overruling is beckoning us to go to the left path.

But is it necessarily so? How do we know that it wasn't Satan who opened the door to beckon us to go in a path he designed to lead us astray?

For this reason we believe that before we make any decision, we should have it pass several tests.

First of all it is in **complete harmony with the principals of his Word.**

Second, does it completely pass the **TEST OF OUR CONSCIENCE!**

And Third, to as much as possible strive to rid ourselves of what our own personal choice would be according to the flesh, and consider what the **LORD** would be most pleased with, what would the LORD want me to do?

Each one must evaluate their own lives, their abilities, weaknesses, their knowledge, to see how they can best serve the Lord as his stewards.

How could we be the most effective, the most efficient, in using our all in perfecting ourselves, our brethren and furthering of our Lord's cause, in harmony with our consecration vows.

In arriving at a decision, if the matter doesn't first pass the test of each of these doorways, then outward circumstances which may appear as providences, should have no bearing on our decision, no matter how conclusive they seem to be.

If however we find that the left path is, - completely in harmony with God's principals, it does pass the test of our conscience, and we truly feel that the Lord would be most pleased with that decision, then we could rest assured that it was God's providence which opened the door to the left path, and decide accordingly.

In 1 Thes. 5:17 we read, "Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

This scripture brings to our attention the importance of prayer to the spirit begotten child of God. We are to pray without ceasing. Oh not literally, but we are to have an attitude of mind of an awareness of God's presence with us continually, and that we can instantly come to him for forgiveness, guidance, help, thanksgiving, or for what ever through out the day.

Thus Pray often:

Pray to give adoration to God.

Pray for forgiveness for SPECIFIC SINS AND SHORT COMINGS.

Pray for God to show you your secret faults that you may not be aware you have.

Pray with an abundance of thanksgiving for SPECIFIC BLESSINGS, and SPECIFIC TRIALS.

Pray for God's Holy Spirit to help you know his will in every decision.

Pray for others that God will give them comfort, grace and strength to endure their experiences, and then reflect on whether God would have you to be an instrument to convey part of that blessing.

Pray for those you have differences with.

Pray for God to help you develop more of the fruits and graces of the spirit.

On the other hand we shouldn't pray for God to remove our trials, but rather pray for god to direct the issue and to give his grace and strength that you may be able to bear it and to learn the lesson God would have you to learn and to be rightly exercised by it.

Another area of the consecrated life we would like to touch upon, is the importance of striving to live with **CONTENTMENT** in your heart. To be happy and thankful for all the bounties of God's love that we are surrounded with.

You know we are surrounded by a world that never seems to be satisfied. They are always seeking for something more, something different, something better, something bigger,

May it not be so with us.

Prov. 15:15 "He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. Better is **LITTLE** with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith."

Paul says in 1 Tim 6:6 "Godliness with contentment is great gain. Having food and raiment let us therewith be content. For they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts."

In **HARVEST GLEANINGS 2 - PAGE 67 WE READ:**

"The Lord's people *having food and raiment in reasonable quality and quantity, should be satisfied, content and thankful - should not spend strength in amassing wealth or in worldly ambitions. On the contrary they should ...engage with zeal in the service of the Lord.*"

If we have "food and raiment in reasonable quality and quantity," but other things seems to be beckoning us onward to greater heights, we need to ask ourselves the question, will my decision be based on it being for my highest spiritual welfare, or is it to have a little better comfort for this life?

We are living in a day where we are surrounded by an abundance of material wealth. It is so easy not to be satisfied with just a reasonable quantity and quality of food, raiment, and shelter.

Society, our careers, our families, our boss may all beckon us to advance further financially. Put in more overtime, get more schooling, move to that city where there are no brethren, you can better yourself.

The irony of it is we probably can, but the question we always need to ask ourselves is, would it be for our best spiritual welfare, **do we really need to?**

There may be times when it would be proper and necessary for a time to better our selves financially. But it is for us to determine **what is enough?**

May we strive to always remember this life is merely a preparation for eternity. What we do in these few 80 or 90 years of this life is going to effect the next thousands of millions of years of eternity.

I believe God would be pleased for each of us to strive to spend the least amount of our consecrated time in secular employment as possible, so that we would have more time to spend in spiritual matters.

May we weigh our decisions carefully, some can truly effect our eternal destiny!

Strive to bear in mind how our consecrated life is to be one of self denial.

Jesus said in Mt 16:24 If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Self denial is something that can be exercised in most every aspect of our life. We need to practice self denial regarding things we do, such as avoiding worldly ambitions, worldly attractions, worldly recreation.

We need to practice self denial in things we purchase. Our clothes, our cars, our homes, In all these, strive to practice economy in all your expenditures, by purchasing what is adequate not that which is the finest.

Remember self denial is not doing without because you can't afford it, but rather self denial is pleasing to the Lord when you CAN AFFORD IT, but choose not to, so you can use more of your time and funds more directly for spiritual benefits.

We are reminded in 1Co 10:31 Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Now we would like to consider for a few moments a privilege and responsibility God has placed upon you and all of us.

2 Cor. 5:18

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, ...Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.

We are **AMBASSADORS** for Christ! What a responsibility. For it literally means you are to be God's and Christ's representatives, - Their spokesmen in the earth.

Matt. 5:14 tells us, "we are to be the light of the world."

Of all the knowledge contained in all the books of the world, NOTHING, NOTHING, compares with the knowledge we have of God's eternal purpose. God's people are the only ones who truly understand what this life is all about.

This knowledge is wonderful, it's priceless and God is telling us it's not just to be kept for ourselves and a few around us. But we are to share it with the world. We are to be the light of the world.

Daily bear this in mind and strive to exercise this great privilege. Something I have found helpful for myself along this line, and I would highly recommend it to you, is to make a determination that you will endeavor to never leave your home without a booklet or tract in your pocket or purses, so much so that you'll feel completely uncomfortable without it.

In so doing you will always be prepared and reminded of the precious privilege you have of being God's Ambassador to share with others the knowledge of his kingdom.

As your journey through life progresses, ever bear in mind the supreme importance the scriptures lay on the development of Agape Love.

Agape love is not the love that is based on human emotions, but it is Godly love, a love that gives expecting nothing in return.

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It is the highest form of love, it is a love that conducts itself in a way that is always for the BEST ETERNAL INTEREST of all God's creation, which includes everyone we ever come in contact with.

1 Cor.16:14 RSV tells us, "Let all that you do be done in (Agape) love.

"How more all encompassing a statement could there be?

.....
Thus our greatest responsibility toward everyone we come in contact with, is to do, to act, to treat, to love in such a way that it will always be for their **greatest eternal interest**.

One of the most difficult aspects of displaying agape love is found in:

MAT 5:43-48

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt (agape) love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, (agape) Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

One of the heights of Christian attainment is shown here, when we can truly with all our heart, have an agape love even for those who hate us and persecute us.

Agape love will hate the sin, but never the sinner. It will not retaliate, but will have compassion remembering all are under the curse and blinded by Satan.

The epitome of agape love that God wants us each to develop is found in 1 Cor. 13.

1 Cor. 13:1-7 (NIV)

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not (agape) love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy, and can fathom all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I have a faith, that can move mountains, but have not (agape) love, I am nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor, and surrender my body to the flames, but have not (agape) love, I gain nothing.

Here we see the epitome of what God desires us to attain.

It isn't oratory, it isn't the ability to understand all prophecy and all scripture, all chronology, it isn't an outstanding faith, it isn't a life of complete sacrifice, it isn't a complete acquiescence to persecution.

No, though all these qualities are to be esteemed and are highly desirable, and we should strive to attain them, however in themselves they are nothing if they haven't contributed to the one most important quality of character God desires, - **agape love**.

Thus our prayer for you, is that each passing day may bring you ever closer to achieving this mark of perfect agape love, and that you will continue in it faithfully to the end of your earthly course.

This journey that you've now begun will not be easy one. For the walk of the consecrated was purposefully designed to be a narrow way of life, to develop and test you and each of us to the very uttermost.

But we can assure you, though difficult, you will echo the words of the Apostle Peter when he said in 1Pe 1:8 (NLT) "Even now (that in this present life) you will be happy with a glorious inexpressible joy."

And if faithful, think for a moment what lies beyond the veil!

Divine Immortality in the courts of heaven for all eternity. Where Ps 16:11 promises: "In God's presence there will be fullness of joy; and at his right hand there will be pleasures for evermore."

One of which will be the privilege of giving life to the dead, - opening blind eyes and deaf ears. And then you'll experience shear delight, as day by day you nurture them, and see them little by little improve on their walk up the highway of holiness. Until one day with tears of joy, you will see them pass their final test and go on to receive perfect everlasting life.

The joy of giving of life will not end however with mankind, but will continue in creating countless other children of God throughout the universe, so that countless others may experience the joy of life, provided by a loving heavenly fathers plan

We are told little beyond this, except that there will always be some new facet of God's eternal plan unfolding, for we're told it will take all eternity to know God in all His fullness.

Be faithful brethren, that when the sun is setting upon your earthly course, it will be your joy to hear those faithful words from our father, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

If there are any others who would desire to symbolize their consecration, we would like to invite you to come now to the front row.

Questions To Ask Candidates At Immersion Service

Ask Candidates to rise:

1. Have you repented of sin and are you trusting in the merit of Christ's sacrifice for the forgiveness of your sins and the basis of your justification?
2. Have you made a full consecration of yourself with all the powers that you possess,-- Talent, money, time, influence, -- all to the Lord, to be used faithfully in his service, even unto death?

On the basis of your vows, in the name of our Lord and your brethren we welcome as a member of the household of faith, with our right hand of fellowship.

Give each a precious promise card.

Ask the candidates to turn around and face the audience.

To the candidates, we would like you to look upon the faces of the family you have entered into, -- a wonderful family, were each is laying down their life for one another, and will for you, as together we walk this narrow way.

A family for which you to have the privilege of helping, encouraging, yea and lay down your life for.

And to those who have entered into this family in the past,, let us look upon these who have now given their hearts to the Lord, and do with our might what we can, to help and assist them to make their calling and election sure.

Scriptures To Give To Each Candidate

“And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.” Mt 19:29

“The little flock will serve the Lord with such delight that they will scarcely know how to cease their efforts.” Reprint - 5413

“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” Ps 103:14

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1Jo 1:9

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Rom. 8:28

“To the enlightened Christian the voice of conscience becomes the voice of God.”
Reprint 3777

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.” Ps 32:8

“Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” 1 Thes. 5:17

“Godliness with contentment is great gain. Having food and raiment let us therewith be content.” 1 Tim 6:6

If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” Mt 16:24

“Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” 1Co 10:31

“We are to be the light of the world.” Matt. 5:14

“Let all that you do be done in (agape) love.” 1 Cor. 16:14

“In God’s presence there will be fullness of joy; and at his right hand there will be pleasures for evermore.” Ps 16:11