

The White Flag of Surrender

The commanding officer evaluates the battle: soldiers, supplies, potential reinforcements; he evaluates his strategic position and the battlefield; he evaluates the enemy. A message is sent; his superiors agree that the battle cannot be won. With certain defeat and unnecessary loss of life on the horizon, a white flag is raised: surrender.

Surrender can also be observed during competitive events, yet without white flags. A team is disheartened by a score that cannot be matched. The game clock ticks on but they have accepted the inevitable. A racer sees the finish line and the distance to the racer who is in the lead. He lets up realizing that he cannot make up the difference. A student is frustrated by the unreasonable demands of an overbearing teacher. With no chance for an 'A' the student unwillingly settles for a 'B.' An employee tries to reason with the unreasonable expectations of his boss. Negotiation is impossible. He struggles to keep up with his work, and begins to question his value to the company. Uncertainty hovers over his upcoming evaluation.

Surrender is most often associated with defeat. It is disheartening. It is the realization that continued effort (fighting, or competing, or reasoning, or negotiating) will not help. The will is crushed and strength is lost. Whether an enemy, a boss, a teacher, a parent, or competitor; defeat is accepted. "I give up," is the weak cry.

As Christians, we accept the admonition to *surrender to God*. Yet, something tells us that God is not the same as an opponent who stands against us. He desires our surrender, yet not to defeat us and lower our sense of personal value.

I remember one of my children returning home from a competition where the youngsters had no scoreboard. I asked her how the game went. "We won!" she responded. My wife shook her head, "No." (Naturally, a couple of parents kept a tally.) My daughter saw no defeat because there was no

visible standard that arbitrarily assigned a greater value to one team or individual over another.

God removes the arbitrary standard of victory set up in the minds of man. This was seen in the life of the Apostle Paul as he considered his *thorn in the flesh* (probably not a moral issue). He prayed to God to remove his *thorn in the flesh* on three occasions. When he did not get help, he did not give up, yet he did surrender. He surrendered his will to God, understanding that God was working through him. He recognized that God's strength worked through his weakness. God did not expect Paul to overcome this weakness, but rather to rely on Him. God expected faith, not personal achievement. So, in his weakness Paul surrendered and received the grace of God.

How Do We Surrender Like Paul?

When confronted with difficult decisions, pray earnestly and frequently for God's wisdom and guidance. Then, live life, being alert to the opening and closing of doors of opportunity.

Are you concerned about taking a new job, making a new investment, attending college, having children, retiring early? Evaluate and plan to the best of your ability. Ask God for insight and wisdom. Then follow through with your plan. If God closes a door, give thanks for his gracious answer; he may be protecting you. If the door is not closed, give thanks for his gracious answer.

Surrendering to God begins with a heart that relies on God to supply every need. Surrender is the *giving up* of one's own will in submission to God's will. Where there are uncertainties in life, kneel in prayer and trust that He will assist. You will be pleasantly surprised by the freedom from worry that comes with the complete surrender to God.

Raise a white flag of surrender to God's will, and enjoy security and victory in Him!

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