

The White Flag of Surrender

A commanding officer evaluates the battle: soldiers, supplies, potential reinforcements; he evaluates his strategic position and the battlefield; he evaluates the enemy. A message is received; 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.

The white flag of surrender dates back to the first century A.D. In earlier times armies would signify surrender by marching with their shields raised over their heads. It was a message to the enemy that there would be no more fighting. Arms had been laid to rest and defeat accepted.

Surrender is also observed during competitive events, yet without white flags or raised shields. A team is disheartened by a score that cannot be matched and their determination fails. A runner that there is too much distance between him and the competitor ahead. He cannot win the race; he lets up.

A student surrenders to an unreasonable instructor accepting a 'B' when there is no chance for an 'A.' An employee surrenders, struggling to keep up with his work, no chance for advancement, questioning his value to the company; all because of the unrealistic expectations of his boss.

Surrender is most often associated with defeat. It is always disheartening. It is the realization that continued fighting (or competing, or reasoning, or negotiating) will only make things worse. 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, we know that God is not the same as a military enemy, unreasonable boss, or overbearing teacher. He does not stand against us. He desires our surren-

der, but His desire is to assist not defeat.

We often think of surrender in terms of value as if we are of lesser value when we surrender. God removes the arbitrary standard of victory set up in the mind of man as illustrated in the life of the Apostle Paul. He prayed to God to remove his on three occasions. This *thorn* represents one of life's uncertainties. When he did not get help, he did not give up, yet he did surrender. He surrendered his will to God, understanding that God worked 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 *in his weakness*. God's standard was on the basis of faith, a reliance on God; not personal achievement. So, in weakness Paul surrendered and received God's grace.

How Do We Surrender Like Paul?

Are you concerned about a 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.

As long as we try to control circumstances of life, God cannot assist. Yet, when we surrender, He will make us victorious; that is His will.

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