

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 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. The game clock still ticks 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. The student gives up achieving an 'A' or 'B' hoping only to survive until the end of the course. An employee has to endure unrealistic expectations of a boss who has little concern for his employees. He tries to reason with his boss, tries to negotiate, but to no avail. To survive 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 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. There is no use trying. "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 a military enemy, unreasonable boss, overbearing teacher or parent; he is not a competitor who stands against us. He desires our surrender, but his intention is 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*. He prayed to God to remove his *thorn in the flesh* on three occasions. (It was not a moral issue. There was no scripture that specifically dealt with this situation or Paul would have already known the answer.) 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. God's standard was on the basis of faith, a reliance on God; 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 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.

He will make us victorious; that is His will.