

Complete Surrender

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The Only Reasonable Response to God

Rom 12:1 – I urge you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies, a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship

I think it was back in the 70's that the last Japanese soldier surrendered

The war had been over for 30 years, but not for him

He hadn't received orders – and the messages he did get

He thought they were enemy propaganda

Because he never surrendered he missed out on 30 years

Of what would have been a productive life

That is the way it is with some Christians

We have received salvation

The war is over

Jesus brought peace to those who were at war with God

A peace not of your making – not by anything you did

So what should be your logical response to what God has done for you

The answer is simple – you must surrender to God

True salvation involves a lifetime of God's control over your life

That is just the way it is

Not you in charge – not the demands of life in charge

God in charge – and only God in charge

Surrender means that you trust God with every aspect of your life

Your job – your family – your finances – your recreation

God does not intend this just for missionaries or church leaders

Surrender is the standard that God requires for each of His children

Now listen - Holding out is always more costly than surrender

Holding out will keep you from enjoying the abundant life that is in Christ

Surrender doesn't just mean surrender of the external life

It means the surrender of the will

It isn't just the things you do and say – it's the reason you do and say them

What we don't surrender to God's control right now

Becomes our enemy that rules over us

Now the terms of Christian surrender are - unconditional and permanent

It isn't until we surrender that we will realize

The surpassing value of Christ over all this world has to offer

Being in God's will always mean a heightened experience of God

And a fulfilled life

In a small town in Oklahoma a young married couple

Decided to surrender to God

Until that time they were engaged in materialistic pursuits

But after two years of marriage they felt the call of God upon their life

Looking back upon it some 50 years later

Bill explained what made the change in their lives

He said - We had both fallen in love with Jesus

Both he and his wife found themselves motivated by Jesus words

Mark 8:34 "If any of you want to be My followers, you must put aside your own pleasures and shoulder your cross, and follow Me closely. If you insist on saving your life, you will lose it. Only those who throw away their lives for My sake and for the sake of the Gospel will ever know what it means to really live".

One Sunday afternoon they decided that knowing and serving Jesus

Was more important than any other pursuit in this world

Right in their living room they knelt together and uttered this prayer

Lord we surrender our lives irrevocably to You, and to Your will. We want to love and serve You with all of our hearts for the rest of our lives.

At that moment they had no idea what God would do with their lives

How dramatically it would change the course of their future

Decades later, Bill and Vonette Bright

Had become household names in the Christian world

They founded and led Campus Crusade for Christ

When Bill was dying

He said the only epitaph he and his wife wanted on their tombstone was

“Slaves of Jesus Christ”

Now you probably won't run a ministry like Campus Crusade

However you can live a life that is used of God and filled with Jesus

But for that to happen - you must surrender

Surrender means the whole of your life

What you fear losing most is what you will try to hold on to

And what you hold onto becomes a snare for you

So God will not accept halfway measures

Scripture gives us images of what it means to be a slave of Jesus Christ

One of the most compelling images is that of the burnt offering

The Israelites were told to not withhold any part of the sacrifice

They were to lay the whole burnt offering on the altar

Laying it all on the altar was to express the worshipper's total dedication

It is a picture of complete surrender to the will of God

Now Christ's death has done away with the need for animal sacrifice

But New Covenant believers

Are encouraged to make an offering of their own

Rom 12:1 – I urge you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship

Paul is using our bodies to represent the sum total of who we are

All that we are - all that we have - and all that we will be

In effect we are to offer ourselves to be totally consumed by God

And Paul tells us - this is the reasonable for us to do

Unlike the O T burnt offering

We are to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice

We go on living in these bodies

Recognizing that they are no longer ours

They now belong to God to use as He pleases

Now being a living sacrifice involves both an initial

And then an ongoing aspect of consecration

I urge you to continually present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice

We surrender once for all times

And then we offer our lives daily

Being a living sacrifice means living out your devotion –

Day by day - activity by activity - for the rest of your life

In marriage a man and a woman surrender the rest of their lives to each other

But the commitment at the altar isn't the end of the action

Once a couple says - "I do"

They begin a lifetime of keeping those vows

Their initial act is then followed by a lifetime of living it out

Neither of the parties knows what life will bring

But they have committed that no matter what they will go through it together

Likewise in your relationship with the Lord

There is a starting place

A point where you said to Him – "I do"

A point where you entered into an eternal covenantal relationship

From that moment on you were not your own

You were a new person – under new ownership

You now belong to the One who created you and redeemed you

Yet when you made that commitment

You could not have been aware of all that it means

You were saved – and maybe that is all you wanted

But God wants more

Your initial surrender to Christ was meant to be the launching pad

For a lifetime of continual surrender

Now on a daily basis you are called to live out that decision

That is what God has called you to - and He will accept nothing less

You live the surrendered life

By responding to the various circumstances and choices of life

In obedience and surrender to God's will

One day at a time – one event at a time – one decision at a time

God wants a complete sacrifice – He desires the whole offering

God's call to lay down our lives on the altar of sacrifice

Means that we give Him all that we are

And everything that concerns us for the rest of our lives

And then each day - moment by moment - decision by decision we live it out

Dr. Helen Roseveare describes what it is like to be a living sacrifice:

It will involve all my time. God wants me to live every minute for Him in accordance with His will and purpose. No off time. **It will involve all my possessions.** All should be available to God for the furtherance of His Kingdom. I must consider that I own nothing. **It will involve all of myself.** My will and emotions, my health and vitality; my thinking and my activities are all to be available to God. **It will involve all my love.** I must bring all the areas of my affections to the Lord for His control.

God considers complete surrender a reasonable act

Reasonable means that a right thinking individual

If they knew all the facts

Would come to this conclusion on their own

God knows that giving absolutely everything

Holding nothing back surrendering it all - makes sense

Now you will have occasions

When giving it all seems totally unreasonable

A little too much for God to require

Those are the times when God has given you a test

A test of whether you are yours or you are His

In light of the incredible mercy God has granted us

And the incredible grace He has given us

It is only reasonable that we give Him all that we are

All that we have - And all we ever hope to be

Shall you devote to your Savior a few hours a week or month or year

Is He not worthy of your whole life

God may not call you to Africa or even to foreign missions

God does call you to offer up your daily life and circumstances

As a living sacrifice – to Him every day

Does that scare you a little bit

It is in our fears that we find Him faithful

Andrew Murray wrote – If there is anything holding you back, or any sacrifice you are afraid of making, come to God and prove how gracious our God is. Never be afraid that He will command from you what He will not bestow!

The truth of it is this

We will not on our own give to God what we desperately long to keep

It takes a work of the Holy Spirit

But Christ forces us to face

The reality of giving up that which we consider most important

Of course our natural tendency is to hold on tightly to what is ours

To protect to preserve what we feel we cannot live without

We're afraid if we surrender everything to Christ

He just might lead us where we don't want to go

And take from us what we most desperately want to keep

But our God is loving and gracious and seeks our good

One fear we face is we won't have what we need

What if I lose my job

What if God wants me to give all my money away

What if I am commanded to go on the mission field

Another fear is that we will lose those things that give us pleasure

Will I be miserable - will He make me do something I don't like to do

Will I need to give up my friends or sports

Think about how you treat your children and then apply that test to God

Why do you take something away or withhold something from them

Because you see the ultimate harm in them keeping it or having it

And you see the ultimate good in your withholding or taking it from them

They may not like it but you know best what is good and bad for them

Spiritually we are like little children who don't realize the dangers
In what we desire and want to hold onto
Abraham left family home and safety to follow God
Then he and his shepherds fought four kings because he trusted God
He sent Ishmael into the desert because he trusted God
Abraham's great desire was for a son and heir
God gave him Isaac
But when God saw that Abraham's son
Was replacing Him as first in Abraham's life
He asked Abraham for a fresh surrender – God told him to sacrifice Isaac
Now listen - Abraham was willing to do that
Not because he was afraid of God
But because he loved and trusted God
God had promised him an heir in Isaac, and he trusted God to keep it
You see - **Faith casts out fear**
The more you trust God the less you fear what He has for you
**If you truly believe that God wants only the best for you;
No demand of His can frighten you**
You can forsake your old friends
You can put your career in His hands
You can give your children to Him
With each surrender Abraham learned more about God
And he learned to trust God even more
When he left his home he left with a promise
God had promised him a land and a dynasty
By the time he was sacrificing Isaac
He was doing it without a direct promise
God just said do it
Abraham was convinced that whatever God demanded of him
Was the reasonable thing to do

Let me assure you

God has a greater purpose for you than you are currently experiencing 2X

By surrendering Abraham discovered the character of God

And Abraham discovered that he could trust God with all that he treasured

For those who surrender God has promised to be your provision

The Bible tells us to be content with what we have

And not to worry about how our future needs will be met

Now this basis for contentment and freedom from anxiety

Is that God has promised to provide our needs

Phil 4:19 - My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus

Based upon that promise when we have a need

Instead of fretting and striving or manipulating

We ought to simply ask Him to provide

When you surrender to God He provides pleasure

My friend Steve thought that if he became a Christian

He wouldn't have any more fun

I guess he thought that being a Christian meant that you spent your life

Singing hymns and looking like you had indigestion

I've met Christians like that

But he has also said that since becoming a Christian

He has never laughed so hard or had so much fun

We cannot ignore that pain is in this world

And we are going to experience some of it

God uses it to sanctify and transform those He loves

But God also created us to experience pleasure and joy and He gives it to us

Psalms 16 – In Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

The closer to God the more full the joy the greater the pleasure

And when you have given Jesus everything

You do not have to worry about personal relationships

Wherever you are He promises to be there with you
You will never be alone again
His Word makes it clear that an intimate relationship with Him
Is the basis for the richest of human relationships
If we do not value Him as our primary relationship
We will live in fear of losing the human relationships we enjoy
We will be plagued with envy jealousy and possessiveness
Only in surrender to God can we find peace

The question God asks every one of His children is
Will you trust me

Whatever the fears whatever the unknowns or the challenges in your life
God has promised to provide for you
To share His pleasures with you
To protect you and give you His enduring presence
Will you trust Him

Let's finish with - Living the surrendered life

Frances Havergall who wrote Take My Life and Let It Be wrote this

Full consecration may be in one sense the act of a moment and in another the work of a lifetime. It must be complete to be real, and yet – if real – it is always incomplete. Consecration is a point of rest and yet a perpetual progression.

Jesus made it perfectly clear to those who wanted to be His disciples

That there was a cost involved

Matt 16:24 – If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

It doesn't get plainer than that

Jesus was not offering those who would be His disciples

Some weekend getaway or an escape from their problems

Everyone listening knew that a cross could only mean one thing - death

In Luke 14 He says – Any one of you who does not give up everything he has, cannot be My disciple

Jesus did not speak in generalities

He identified specific issues
That must be surrendered by those who would be His followers
Things like our relationships our affections
Our physical bodies our rights and our possessions
It is one thing to have an emotional experience at a Church gathering
It is quite another thing to live it out day by day
It is in the laboratory of day to day life
That our initial consecration to Christ is proven

The question I want you to ask you is
Are you surrendering to Jesus in every area of your life
The fact is that many well behaved clean nice smelling Christians
Go through life rarely considering the question
What does God desire of me
But Jesus said in **Luke - Why do you call Me Lord, and not do what I say**
In other words
Why do you claim that I am in charge of your life
And then run your life as though you were in charge and I don't matter
To call Jesus Lord
Means to say yes to His will His Word and His ways
We cannot and should not call Him Lord
And live our lives like He doesn't care or doesn't matter
Total surrender to Christ means submitting every detail
And dimension of your life to His sovereign loving rule
To some this message may sound like a call to bondage
But to those who have done it
Laid down their arms and waved the flag of surrender
They know it is the path to true freedom
When that Japanese soldier come our of the jungle with his hands in the air I'm sure he
thought his freedom was over
But it wasn't until after he surrendered that he experienced real freedom

He had been imprisoned by his unwillingness to give up

With surrender comes a host of blessings

That cannot be experienced any other way

The grace to obey God

The release from having to run our own world

The peace of God

The fullness of God

And greater fruitfulness than we dreamed possible

Someone has said

The will of God is what we would choose if we knew what God knew

Well we don't know what God knows

To give Him our all – to be dead to self

Means that we need to have faith in His love and in His power

Do you – will you