

Surrendering Self to the Service of the Savior

Introduction:

- I. C.S. Lewis once said, *“Until you have given up yourself to Him you will not have a real self.”* He was speaking of surrendering oneself to Jesus Christ. If there was one word that could capture the essence of true discipleship, of truly serving Jesus, it would be the word surrender. To surrender means to yield or relinquish. It means to give oneself up completely to the power and control of another. We sometimes sing the song, “I Surrender All.” The question is, when we sing that song, are we singing the truth or are we singing a lie?

- II. What the church needs today, perhaps more than anything else, is a renewed commitment to surrendering ourselves to Jesus. And let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, it is only when we surrender ourselves to Jesus, heart, soul and mind, that He can really make a difference in our lives now and help us go to heaven after a while.

In The Wonderful Spirit Filled Life, Charles Stanley writes:

In water-safety courses a cardinal rule is never to swim out to a drowning man and try to help him as long as he is thrashing about. To do so is to commit suicide. As long as a drowning man thinks he can help himself, he is dangerous to anyone who tries to help him. His tendency is to grab the one trying to aid him and take them both down in the process. The correct procedure is to stay just far enough away so that he can't grab you. Then you wait. And when he finally gives up, you make your move. At that point the one drowning is pliable. He won't work against you. He will let you help.

That's a perfect illustration of our relationship with God. Until we stop trying to save ourselves, relying our own power, our own plans and our own purposes; until we stop thrashing about in the drowning waters of life, God won't make His move and help us. We need to give up. I know that is a scary thing to do because we are convince that if we give up, we will sink and drown, but the truth is God is just an arm's length away. He is waiting for us to surrender ourselves to Him so that He can move in and rescue us. So, let's talk a little while about surrendering self to the service of the Savior.

Lesson:

I. **Why Don't We Surrender?**

May I humbly suggest to you that none of us have totally surrendered to Jesus. There is still a little fight in all of us, isn't there. Certainly, some are trying a little harder than others, but none of us have surrendered ourselves completely so the question is why? Let me tell you why, and know that I say this to help us, not hurt. It begins with a lack of faith in God. It ends with an unwillingness to obey, and in between a lack of faith and an unwillingness to obey, is a desire to be in control. This is really the foundation upon which the refusal to surrender is built. We want to be in control of our own lives.

Now, while we all like to be in control to some extent, for some it is an obsession. The one who is obsessed with control, not only has to be in control of himself, but he wants to be in control of every situation and even every person in his life. Now, in order for a person to have that much control, he has to call all the shots, make all the decisions, and rely on no one's opinion but his own. Therefore, this kind of person tends to be arrogant and obstinate and intolerant of the mistakes of others. He also tends to have a hard time trusting others. Now, it is easy to see that this kind of person will probably struggle with the concept of surrendering to another. Here's the problem: I have just described all of us to some extent. We all like calling the shots and making the decisions don't we? There is a little obstinacy and intolerance in all of us. So we all have to be careful that we don't allow our desire to be in control turn into an obsession.

Listen to me: if you have to be in control all the time, you can't be a follower of Jesus. Let me say that again: if you have to be in control all the time, you cannot be a follower of Jesus. The key word there is *follower*. True disciples of Christ don't walk side by side with Jesus, they walk behind Jesus and follow Him. Jesus is the leader. Jesus tells us, through His Word, what kind of decisions we should make, what kind of places we should go and what kind of people we should be and we simply follow His lead. We must look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith to determine just what kind of lives we are going to live. In other words, we must surrender ourselves to Him. We must allow His mind to be our mind. We must allow His voice to be our voice. We must allow His hands and feet to be our hands and our feet. The point of it is this: we must allow Jesus to live through us. That's what it means to surrender. Listen to Paul:

Gal 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

This passage, ladies and gentlemen, is all about surrendering to Jesus. Now, for the rest of our time, I want to examine this great verse in three parts under the caption, "What It Means to Surrender."

II. What It Takes to Surrender:

A. Total Faith in Christ.

The actual surrendering is found in the first part of the verse, but it was only made possible because Paul had complete confidence and faith in Jesus. Do you see that? "...the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God..." Now once again, the one who has to be in control is going to struggle here because he has more faith in himself than anyone else, even Jesus. If you find yourself having to be in control, you have to let go of self and realize that Jesus can help you live a better life, make better decisions and enjoy more success than you can have relying on yourself. Just let go. That's what we must all do and the inability to do that is what stops us from surrendering

our all to Jesus. We must learn to trust Jesus explicitly. Let me tell you something brethren, if ever there was a person who deserves your unwavering confidence, it is Jesus.

Illustration: Christ Holds Everything Together

A guide took a group of people through an atomic laboratory and explained how all matter was composed of rapidly moving electric particles. The tourists studied models of molecules and were amazed to learn that matter is made up primarily of space. During the question period, one visitor asked, "If this is the way matter works, what holds it all together?" For that, the guide had no answer. But as Christians we know the answer, don't we? In fact, we know the better question: The right question is not what holds it all together, but WHO holds it all together, we know the answer and the answer is Jesus Christ! (Practical Illustrations).

Col 1:16-17

16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Don't you know that if Jesus can hold the universe together, he can certainly hold your life together? "Oh, but you don't know how complicated my life has become preacher." Maybe I don't, but I know this: it is not as complicated as the universe. If Jesus can hold together all of the planetary systems and the trillions of stars found in all the galaxies that are in existence, then holding together your life and mind isn't even a challenge. All we have to do and learn to trust Him completely. Peter once demonstrated this kind of faith in Jesus (**Lk. 5:1-6**).

Notice the words of Peter, "*Master, we toiled all night and took nothing.*" The instruction from Jesus to let down the nets for a catch didn't make any sense to Peter. Peter and the other fisherman had already gotten out of the boats and were washing the nets. Why? Because they had toiled all night and had not caught any fish. They were tired and ready to go home. So when Jesus told Peter to cast the nets back into the water, his body said, "no I'm tired." His mind said, "no, it doesn't make any sense." His experience said, "no, there is no fish in this part of the lake." But his heart said, "Jesus, I trust you," so his mouth said, "at your word, I will let down the nets." This is what it means to surrender to Jesus. We do what Jesus tells us to do even when it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to us. The pages of inspiration are full of examples of men and women who obeyed God even when His instructions, from a human perspective, didn't make sense.

- When God warned Noah to build an ark because the world was going to be destroyed by flood, that didn't make any sense, but Noah built that ark on dry ground where water was nowhere to be found. Why? Because he trusted God completely.
- When God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, the son in whom God said Abraham's seed would be called and the son that

Abraham waited for 25 years to come, that didn't make any sense, but Abraham obeyed God. Why? Because he trusted God completely.

- When God opened the Red Sea, the waters standing in place as if they were held back by an invisible wall and Moses commanded the people to go down in the midst of the sea, that didn't make any sense; those waters after all could come crashing down on them at any moment, but the people obeyed God. Why? Because they trusted God completely.
- When God told the children of Israel to march around the walled city of Jericho once a day for six days and seven times on the seventh day and that when the priests blow their horns and the people shouted the mighty walls of Jericho would collapse, that surely didn't make any sense, but the people obeyed God and the walls fell down flat. Why? Because the people trusted God completely.
- When God commanded Gideon to save Israel from the oppression of the mighty Midianites with just 300 men, that didn't make any sense, but Gideon obeyed God and gained the victory. Why? Because he trusted God completely.

All of these were people of faith who were given instructions that didn't make a whole lot of sense from a human standpoint but because they trusted God, they surrendered and did what God told them to do. So, the first step in surrendering to the Savior is learning to trust Him explicitly.

B. Crucify Self.

Members who are uncommitted. Members who only attend Sunday morning services. Members who refuse to attend Bible Study on Wednesday nights. Members who don't support functions like men's training classes or women's Bible studies or gospel meetings. Members who put their own wants and wishes and will before God wills. Members who are sporadic in everything they do spiritually. All of these members have one thing in common, and I'm afraid that churches are full of them, they haven't crucified self. Listen to me: without the crucifying of self, everything is just a charade, a farce and a fake. Without the crucifying of self, everything is just pretend and sooner or later the "true you" will come to the surface and be exposed. You see, it's the "true you" that must be crucified. Until one crucifies the flesh, the "true you" will always rise up and say, "me first, God second." It's the "true you" that ask the question, "what do I want?" "What do I want to do?" "What do I want to say?" "What do I want to feel?" That's the "true you," and as long as he is alive within you, he will always get his way in the end. But when you crucify self, that is, when you crucify the "true you," the question is no longer "what do I want?" but you begin to ask the question like, "what does Jesus want?" Can you not see that this is the only path that leads to pleasing God

consistently?” What I’m saying to you is this: in order to truly surrender all, we have to replace “self” as the dominate force in our lives with God. Period. When it is all said and done, when all the dust has cleared, when all the arguments have been answered and all the excuses have be removed, Christianity just gets down to this: who is in control of your life? That’s it! And the fact is, if you haven’t crucified self, self will be your answer. Oh Jesus might have a say in your life. You’ll get a little input from God when it’s time to make a decision. You might give an ear to the Bible once and a while, but the fact is self will always have the final word. How you live will be determined by self. Where you go will be determine by self. What you do will be determined by self. How you talk, the way you dress, even what you regularly think about, will all be determined by what self wants. Listen to me: what kind of parent you are, what kind of husband or wife you are, what kind of church member you are, that will all be determined, not by what God wants or what God says, but by what self wants and what self wants is often contrary to the will of God.

So, I hope the picture is clear. There is only one way for us to truly surrender to God and be what we ought to be—we must crucify self. This is why Paul wrote what he did in Gal. 5:24. Listen to him:

Gal 5:24

24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus...

Stop right there. Who is Paul speaking of when he writes of those who belong to Christ? Are those who belong to Jesus, simply those who have obeyed the gospel? No. We understand that one has to obey the gospel in order to belong to Christ, but everyone Paul is writing to has done that. Paul’s is talking about those who truly belong to Jesus. He is talking about those who Jesus can control, that is, those who Jesus can influence and impact because they have surrender to Him and so they are being led by the Spirit. Who are they? We don’t have to guess because Paul tells us who they are. Listen to him now:

Gal 5:24

24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

We know this is not talking about a physical crucifixion. It’s the old man that is crucified. I’m talking about the man whose nature has been corrupted by sin. I’m talking about the man with the selfish attitude that always puts himself first. I’m talking about the man who loves the world and is attracted by the things of the world. That man has been crucified along with the old life, the old lusts and the old ambitions. Now there is a new man with a new life.

2 Cor. 5:17

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. NKJV

Paul is still talking about the inner man, not the physical man. Once you put to death that old man, that is, the “real you,” now there is a “new you.” Now you have a new outlook. Now you have a new attitude. Now you have new passions and new desires. Now that you have crucified self, you are going in a new direction.

Isa 43:18-19

18 "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I am doing a new thing..." ESV

Contextually that last statement is made by God, but the meaning of the words are applicable to the new creation in Christ who has crucified the flesh. You see that new man says,

“In the past I have cared too much about self, and not enough about God, but now I’m doing a new thing.” “I used to be sporadic in my attendance, allowing the smallest of excuses to stand in my way, but now I’m doing a new thing.” I used to think only about how I could fulfill the lust of the flesh and the passions thereof, but now that I have crucified the flesh, I’m about to do a new thing. I used to love my friends and hate my foes, but I have put off the old man and I’m about to do a new thing. I used to love my wife a little and love myself a lot, but now I’m going to love myself less, love my wife more and love God the most because I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I...” What Paul? “Not I...” What Paul? “NOT I!” Why? Because “I” has been put to death. I’m ready to do a new thing. I’m ready to put God first. I’m ready to study more and pray more. I’m ready to work more and worship more. I’m ready to praise more and profess more. I have crucified self and so I’m ready to surrender self to the service of the Savior. Now, there one more thing. We are trusting Jesus and we have crucified self, now it’s time to move from talking to toiling. Now it is time to allow Jesus to live in us.

C. Allow Jesus to Live in Us.

This is the final step to totally surrendering to God. It is an action step. Paul said, *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”* The word “lives” is a present active verb indicating continuous action. So then, not only does Jesus live in us, He is continuously acting through and by us. The point of it is this: if Christ lives in us, we will be actively involved in doing the work that He wants accomplished in the world today. Surrendering to Jesus, then, is not just talk. Surrendering to Jesus is not just a philosophical belief. At the end of the day, surrendering to Jesus is to say, “Jesus, here am I, use me for the glorification of God and the furtherance of the gospel.” To surrender to Jesus is to say, “Jesus, I want to go wherever you send me. I want to do the work that you give me to do. I want to teach the message that you give me to teach. I want to live the life that you command me to live.” But it is not just to talk about these things, it is to do it. To surrender is to live that life and do

that work and to teach that message. Only then is Jesus truly living in us. The proof is in the practice, not the professing. Someone has said, “*Christianity is the outliving of an indwelling Christ.*” That’s right. We can’t live the life of a Christian without Christ living in us, but the fact is if Christ is living in us, we will live the active life of a Christian (**Jn. 15:1-8**).

What kind of fruit will we bear if Christ is living in us?

- *The fruit of faithfulness*
- *The fruit of the Spirit*
- *The fruit of soul-winning*

Now, let me close by emphasizing this: in all of this activity that is now characteristic of our life in Christ and Christ in us, there is no room for boasting or bragging. All glory goes to God because anything we do scripturally is really God working through us. That’s that whole point of this. We now live better lives that bring more glory to God because, due to our complete surrendering to Him, He is now in control living through us (**Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:24-29**).

Conclusion:

Have you surrendered to God? Why hold on to self when self can only mess things up? Do you want a better life? Do you want more joy, more contentment and more satisfaction? Let go of self and let God take the reins. Stop being afraid to give control of your life over to God. He know what’s best for you and He knows how your life ought to be lived better than you do. So let’s just give up self and say, “God, here you go. Here’s the reins of my life. Take over!” Let’s all say to God together, “God, I surrender.”