

CHAPTER 15

Total Surrender

KEY IDEA

I dedicate my life to God's purposes.

KEY VERSE

I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. – Romans 12:1

BEGIN BY RECITING THE KEY VERSE AND THE KEY IDEA TOGETHER AS A GROUP.

LESSON

INTRODUCTION:

Beware of stopping anywhere short of total surrender to God. Most of us have only a vision of what this really means, but have never truly experienced it. -Oswald Chambers

Christianity has many ideas that seem to contradict and that challenge the intellect and selfishness of humanity.

> One essential principle is that of surrender. It is not a word used in the Bible, but is still a requirement for successful Christian living.

Here are a few definitions of surrender:

> "Surrender" is a military term which refers to ceasing resistance to an enemy or opponent and submitting to their authority.

< In the spiritual sense, we are in a battle between our will and the will of God.

> "Surrender" means to yield ownership, to relinquish control over what we consider ours.

< When we surrender to God, we are simply acknowledging that what we "own" actually belongs to him.

< By surrendering to God, we admit that He is ultimately in control of everything, including our present circumstance.

< Surrendering to God helps us to let go of whatever has been holding us back from God's best for our lives.

This world is a battleground.

> Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:17-19), the world God created has been in conflict with Him (Romans 8:20-22).

> Satan is called the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), and due to Adam's sin, we are born on his team (Romans 5:12).

< We are fighting against God's purposes and designs for our lives.

Surrender is also a battle term. It implies giving up all rights to the conqueror. When an opposing army surrenders, they lay down their arms, and the winners take control from then on.

> Surrendering to God works the same way. God has a plan for our lives, and surrendering to Him means we set aside our own plans and seek His.

< The good news is that God's plan for us is always in our best interest (Jeremiah 29:11), unlike our own plans that often lead to destruction (Proverbs 14:12).

< Our Lord is a wise and benevolent victor; He conquers us to bless us.

WE GIVE OVER LORDSHIP TO JESUS

To acknowledge Jesus as Lord is to surrender to Him.

> It is not like accepting defeat, because there is no loss of life or property.

> To surrender means the end of the fight, and there is no more argument.

> It is the solid realization that God's way is a better way.

There are different levels of surrender, all of which affect our relationship with God.

> Initial surrender to the drawing of the Holy Spirit leads to salvation (John 6:44; Acts 2:21).

< When we let go of trying to earn God's favor and rely upon the finished work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, we become a child of God (John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

> There are also times of greater surrender, during a Christian's life, that bring deeper intimacy with God and greater power in service.

< The more areas of our lives we surrender to God, the more room there is for the filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

< When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we exhibit traits of His character (Galatians 5:22).

< The more we surrender to God, the more our old self-worshiping nature is replaced with one that resembles Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

< Romans 6:12-13 says that God demands that we surrender the totality of our selves; He wants the whole, not a part.

< Jesus said that His followers must deny themselves (Mark 8:34)—another call to surrender.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SURRENDER YOUR LIFE?

Surrendering your life means:

- Following God's lead even if it's without knowing where he's sending you;
- Waiting for God's timing without knowing when it will come.
- Expecting a miracle without knowing how God will provide.
- Trusting God's purpose without understanding the circumstances.

> You know you're surrendered to God when you rely on God to work things out instead of trying to manipulate others, force your agenda, and control the situation.

< You let go and let God work. You don't have to always be in charge. Instead of trying harder, you trust more.

< You also know you're surrendered when you don't react to criticism and rush to defend yourself.

As you mature in your Christian life and are able to surrender more and more to the purposes of God, do you find the above statement to be true? Why is our reaction to criticism a sign of total surrender?

Even with total surrender, God supplies many material blessings to those who love him. But whatever those material, physical and emotional blessings may be, it is absolutely necessary to remember that they do not belong to us—remember, we are the managers, not the owners.

> It is not ours to question God’s motives and purposes when we see others “better off” or “worse off” than we are, but it is our responsibility to be obedient with what he has given us and content with what he has not given us.

What is it that you desire today? What "right" or “thing” are you clinging to, even though deep down inside you know you'd be better off if you gave it up?

> One good test of our total surrender is to ask ourselves this question: “Giving up _____ would cause me to feel uncomfortable, edgy, anxious, sad, insecure, angry, vulnerable, etc.?”

How would you fill in this blank? Would it be: financial security, a relationship, house, hobby, form of recreation? What are you clinging to?

It’s like the rich, young ruler experienced when Jesus told him to sell all he had and give it to the poor (Matthew 19:16-22).

> Jesus’ command was not a requirement for salvation.

> The man’s unwillingness was not a financial matter, it was a matter of total surrender.

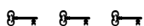
< He failed to understand that by giving all he had to God, God could then work through him and bestow on him the blessings that come with surrender and service.

In our key verse Paul urges us to be living offerings/sacrifices. God doesn’t want a dead sacrifice; He wants a living one.

> He intends for His people to live in joyful surrender to him; to find our pleasure in him, instead of worldly pursuits.

> In the OT, sacrifices were to be pure because they were for a holy God. Since God is holy, an offering presented to him must also be holy – pure and given to his service alone.

< This is what we strive for in our total surrender.



FROM THAWK, ACE, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS by Randy Frazee

We are only able to strive for total surrender in our lives through God's wonderful gift of grace. This does not mean we give up our lives to him out of some obligation or debt in trade for redemption; nor does it mean giving up control because he has overpowered us. Rather we fully surrender to him out of total desperation and realization for the need of a Savior.

The first eleven chapters of the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans details our need for mercy and God's gracious provision of mercy through Jesus. Now, as chapter 12 begins, he writes, "In view of God's mercy . . ." As we think of God's mercy, we are left with an obvious response of total surrender to God's will. His mercy should so capture our hearts for today and forever that we are compelled to give up our lives to him — from love, not duty; for worship, not works.



KEYQUESTION: How do I cultivate a life of sacrificial service?

A genuine decision to follow and obey God is a decision of total surrender. When God the Father offered up his Son for our redemption, he revealed how valuable we are to him. The gift of salvation was an act of total surrender by our Savior. Are you willing to return the gesture? Are you prepared to surrender your life for his purposes?

THE EXPECTATION

God is often referred to in the Old Testament as "jealous." This passionate description comes out of the language of love, similar to that of a marriage covenant. God is totally committed to us. He, in turn, asks us to be totally committed to him. He will not share our allegiance with anyone or anything else. He made this very clear to the Israelites when he etched the Ten Commandments on the stone tablets. The first three commandments clearly communicate the exclusivity of our relationship with God.

Exodus 20:1-7 (CEV)

20 God said to the people of Israel: ² I am the LORD your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt where you were slaves. ³ Do not worship any god except me. ⁴ Do not make idols that look like anything in the sky or on earth or in the ocean under the earth. ⁵ Don't bow down and worship idols. I am the LORD your God, and I demand all your love. If you reject me, I will punish your families for three or four generations. ⁶ But if you love me and obey my laws, I will be kind to your families for thousands of generations. ⁷ Do not misuse my name. I am the LORD your God, and I will punish anyone who misuses my name.

The Ten Commandments are highlighted as the core of the covenant stipulations revealed to Moses.
> They define the life that the Lord calls his people to live before him and with each other.
> The commandments indicate to Israel how to remain faithful to the Lord.

As a preface to the Ten Commandments, and the rest of the law, the description in verse 1 (*who brought you out of ...*) signifies that Israel's call to covenant faithfulness is preceded by, and based upon the Lord's acts on their behalf in this covenant relationship.

> God is willing to give totally to the relationship, he expects the same of the Hebrews.

Verse 3 stipulates that the Hebrews are to have no other gods, not even one, other than God/Yahweh.

> This prohibition, banning the worship of all but one God, was unique. Polytheism was inherently tolerant of the worship of many gods since no single god was believed to control all of nature or desire a relationship with human life.

< God was the total support and security that Israel needed. Going another way would mean their demise.

In Verse 4 God has made it clear that he has power over every aspect of creation because it is His.

> God's jealousy is his zeal for his creatures' well-being because his creatures only function properly when giving God the honor and worship he deserves.

NOTE in verse 6: The punishment of descendants is intended as a deterrent, not a transfer of guilt to the descendants in their own right.

> Immoral behavior on the part of parents often results in suffering for their children and grandchildren. This is one of the aspects of sin; it harms others besides the sinner himself.

< This statement could also refer to the punishment of an entire household, not to punishment of children yet to be born. The Hebrew families would have several generations living together.

NOTE on Verse 7: Unlike modern English, "name" here is not restricted to a "label." Rather, it refers to one's reputation or character. One's name is a reflection on oneself. So to use someone's name is the equivalent of having their power of attorney. By misusing His name they defame His character.

PROFILES OF TOTAL SURRENDER – SHADRACH, MESHACH & ABEDNEGO

Despite having God's expectations physically written in stone, the Israelites failed to remain faithful. After many years of disobedience, the people suffered when God removed his protection. The northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians and the southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonians. Before Judah was captured, some of the people were carried off in deportations. Along with Daniel, a small group of bright young men — Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — were selected from the captives to be trained to serve the king. While in captivity, they were forced to make a crucial choice: worship the one true God or compromise and save their lives. They chose total surrender.

See Daniel 3:1-28 (pgs. 236-238 in *BELIEVE*).

Story Summary:

About 600 years before Jesus Christ was born, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered Jerusalem and took captive many of Israel's finest citizens. Among those deported to Babylon were three young men from the tribe of Judah: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

In captivity the youths were given new names. Hananiah was called Shadrach, Mishael was called Meshach, and Azariah was called Abednego. They excelled in wisdom and knowledge and became favorites to King Nebuchadnezzar. The king put them into service among his most trusted wise men and counselors. At the request of another young Hebrew, Daniel, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as administrators under Daniel.

The other men of the king's court were envious of the Hebrews and knew of their piety to the Jewish God. So in order to trap the Hebrews, they convinced King Nebuchadnezzar to build a huge golden image and command all the people to fall down and worship it whenever they heard the sound of music played in the public areas. Anyone who failed to bow and worship the image would be thrown into a large furnace with an intense blaze.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were determined to worship only the One true God, and their refusal to bow down to the statue was reported to the king. Courageously they stood before him as the king pressured the men to deny their God. They said, "Your Majesty, we don't need to defend ourselves. The God

we worship can save us from you and your flaming furnace.¹⁸ But even if he doesn't, we still won't worship your gods and the gold statue you have set up." (Daniel 3:16-18)

In anger, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than normal. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were bound and cast into the flames. The blast of fire from the furnace was so hot it killed the soldiers who had carried out the order.

But as King Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace, he could hardly believe what he saw: "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods." (Daniel 3:25)

Then the king called the men to come out of the furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego emerged unharmed, with not even a hair on their heads singed or the smell of smoke on their clothing. This made a big impression on Nebuchadnezzar who declared, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God." (Daniel 3:28)

Through their total surrender and God's miraculous deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that day, the rest of the Israelites in captivity were given freedom to worship and protection from harm by the king's decree. And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego received a royal promotion.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were young men when their faith was severely tested. Yet, even threatened with death, they would not compromise their beliefs.

> God's miraculous intervention in a moment of crisis is not promised. If it were, believers would not need to exercise faith. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego trusted God and determined to be faithful without any guarantee of deliverance.

> When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego took their stand before Nebuchadnezzar, they didn't know with certainty that God would deliver them. They had no assurance they would survive the flames. But they stood firm anyway.

In the face of death could you boldly declare as these three young men did: "Whether God rescues me or not, I will stand for him. I will not compromise my faith, and I will not deny my Lord."? Comment.

PROFILES OF TOTAL SURRENDER – ESTHER

About 70 years after the first deportation of Jews to Babylon, the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians. Although King Cyrus of Persia decreed in 538 BC that the Jews could return to Judah, many of them chose not to go home. We know that Esther and her cousin Mordecai stayed in Susa under the rule of the Persian king Xerxes. When the reigning queen was removed from power, Esther (who kept her heritage a secret) was selected to replace her. Haman, the king's highest official, hated Mordecai because Mordecai refused to bow down and honor him. As revenge, Haman made plans to kill Mordecai and all the Jews in Xerxes' kingdom. Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Esther had a

difficult decision to make: protect her people or protect her position as queen — and perhaps her own life. She chose total surrender.

See Esther 3:1-4:16 (pgs. 238-240 BELIEVE)

Story Summary:

Esther lived in ancient Persia about 100 years after the Babylonian captivity. When her parents died, she was adopted and raised by her older cousin Mordecai.

One day the king of the Persian Empire, Xerxes I, threw a lavish party. On the final day of the festivities, he called for his queen, Vashti, eager to flaunt her beauty to his guests. But the queen refused to appear before Xerxes. Out of anger, he deposed Queen Vashti, forever removing her from his presence.

To find his new queen, Xerxes hosted a royal beauty pageant and Esther was chosen for the throne. Her cousin Mordecai became a minor official in the Persian government of Susa.

Soon after, Mordecai uncovered a plot to assassinate the king. He told Esther about the conspiracy, and she reported it to Xerxes, giving credit to Mordecai. The plot was thwarted and Mordecai's act of kindness was preserved in the chronicles of the king.

At this same time, the king's highest official was a man named Haman. He hated the Jews and he especially hated Mordecai, who had refused to bow down to him.

So, Haman devised a scheme to have every Jew in Persia killed. The king bought into the plot and agreed to annihilate the Jewish people on a specific day. Meanwhile, Mordecai learned of the plan and shared it with Esther, challenging her with these words: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:13-14)

Esther urged all of the Jews to fast and pray for deliverance. Then risking her own life, she approached the king with a plan of her own.

She invited Xerxes and Haman to a banquet where eventually she revealed her Jewish heritage to the king, as well as Haman's plot to have her and her people killed. In a rage, the king ordered Haman to be hung on the gallows--the very same gallows Haman had built for Mordecai.

Mordecai was promoted to Haman's high position and Jews were granted protection throughout the land.

Most of the details about how Esther felt are not printed in the book named after her. She may have felt helpless at times, since choices were being made about her life that she couldn't control. But every choice she did make was wise.

> We also get a glimpse of her inner life through her concern for Mordecai in 4:4, her natural hesitation to take matters into her own hands in 4:11, and her caution in approaching the king and put her life at risk in 4:15-16.

We can easily get frustrated over decisions made around us that are out of our control. We may even resent God for not stepping in and arranging things the way we want them. But every day is filled with choices.

> Even the decision to trust God in the middle of circumstances that seem out of control is a choice. It is a choice of surrender.

> Esther is a good example for us in making wise choices and leaving the results in God's hands—even when it involves our own lives.

Have you ever been in a situation where you had to make a choice that would affect the lives of others? If so, were you able to trust God for the outcome, no matter what it might be?

PROFILES OF TOTAL SURRENDER –JESUS

Paraphrased from *THANK, ACE, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

Jesus practiced total surrender daily. He invites us to adopt this same lifestyle with his use of “all-in” language in the Gospels. *“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.’ ”* Matthew 16:24-25

In Luke we are given examples of what total surrender does *not* look like:

> The first example: *“As they [the disciples and Jesus] were walking along the road, a man said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ ”* (Luke 9:57)

< This man’s declaration sounds like an impressive admission of total surrender. Shouldn’t this bold statement excite Jesus and be exactly the kind of follower he was looking for?

< This was Jesus’ response: *“Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”* (9:58) And then in the next verse we see Jesus moving his attention to another man.

< What happened? We are left to assume this man was exercising lip service, not exhibiting service to the Lord. In this first encounter, we see that there is a high cost to living a life of total surrender (Luke 14:26 – 33).

> The second example: *He [Jesus] said to another man, ‘Follow me.’ But he replied, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’* (Luke 9:59-60)

< While at first Jesus’ response sounds harsh, we must remember he was walking with men who had already left behind everything to follow him.

< His invitation was urgent and current. Jesus’ call was to spread the message of life, not to carry out the rites of death. His disciples were moving forward with the kingdom and the business of life.

> The third example: *Still another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.’ Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.’* (9:61-62)

< Again, Jesus’ response may take us by surprise. But what we can take from both the previous example and this one, is to realize that delayed obedience to God is equivalent to disobedience.

< When he invites us into his work, the time is now, not later.

When Jesus was healing, performing miracles, and meeting needs, crowds of people appeared to be all-in. Yet when he made strong statements, such as in the verses above, about the reality of following him, many decided total surrender simply cost too much.

Have you ever wondered if total surrender may cost too much? Be honest and write those feelings below and bring them to God.

Jesus left his eternity in heaven knowing that the cross was at the end. He knew he was coming as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

> He was not only called to die a physical death, but was also required to die a spiritual death.

< Spiritual death meant separation from God. Jesus' ultimate cost for his total surrender was to experience this type of separation.

< Jesus knew that He was required to take on the sin of mankind, which required separation from his Father.

< This caused even Jesus to ask if there was another way to accomplish the task.

> Jesus mission was clear, he knew there was no other way.

By the time Jesus hung on the cross, even his closest friends had abandoned him. His final act of total surrender to the Father was completed alone. The road walked with Jesus is truly the narrow one he describes in Matthew 7:13 – 14.



KEY IDEA: I dedicate my life to God's purposes.

THE COST OF TOTAL SURRENDER

A commitment to surrender completely to God's purposes is easier said than done. Jesus made this clear to his disciples and never masked the harsh reality that they would encounter or the impact it would have on their lives. He also never shied away from difficult conversations, as is obvious from his interactions with Peter regarding the disciple's betrayal before Jesus' death. Through Peter, we learn that the cost of total surrender can sometimes feel like it's too much to bear.

See Luke 22:7-62 (pgs. 241-244 in *BELIEVE*)

PETER'S EXPERIENCE:

In Luke 22:31-34 we read of Jesus telling Peter about his upcoming denial. It's interesting to note that Peter denied the denial. His words spoke of total surrender, but when the time came to confirm that surrender, his words were only words.

> In verse 32 we read that Jesus prayed for Peter.

< We know from New Testament writings that Peter turned back to his faith. But his restored faith was not his own accomplishment, but a result of the Holy Spirit's work.

< Our total surrender must come with the help of the Holy Spirit who gives us the power to make the commitment.

Society will tell us to fulfill our own desires as much as possible — which is the opposite of our key idea. Committing our lives over to God will be unpopular; it will make for difficult days.

> We are choosing to go against the grain of the self-centered human nature. But note our key idea has a goal and purpose — to dedicate our lives to God's purposes.

> Total surrender to Christ will result in regular and genuine acts of love, not in humanitarian efforts directed by men for applause and recognition.

THE INSPIRATION OF MARTYRS

Despite his betrayal, Peter was graciously given a second chance to prove he was totally surrendered to God's purposes. After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus forgave and reinstated Peter to a leadership position. Peter boldly lived out his faith.

Stephen, however, was the first martyr of the Christian church. Although he was not an apostle, he played an important role in the early church by ministering to the widows in Jerusalem and by being a powerful witness for Jesus. His death triggered a tidal wave of persecution in the first century. Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin where he put his total surrender courageously on display.

See Acts 6:8-7:60 (pgs. 244-248).

Story Summary:

In the early Christian church, a few years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the believers in Jerusalem put all their resources together. However, the Greek Christians complained that their widows were being ignored in the daily distribution of food.

Seven deacons were appointed by the group to oversee sharing of food and other everyday matters. Stephen, a man "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit," was among them.

Stephen performed great wonders and miracles among the people of Jerusalem. Jews of the outer provinces began to argue with him, but they could not win against his spirit-filled wisdom. So in secret, they convinced false witnesses to lie, accusing Stephen of blasphemy against Moses and God. In ancient Judaism, blasphemy was a crime punishable by death.

The accusers brought Stephen before the Sanhedrin where the false witnesses said they heard Stephen say Jesus would destroy the Temple. Stephen launched into a powerful defense, detailing the history of the Jews from Abraham through the prophets. He concluded that the Sanhedrin had murdered the prophesied Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

The crowd became furious at him, but Stephen looked up to heaven: "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:56)

At that, the mob dragged Stephen out of the city and began to stone him. They laid their coats in front of a young man named Saul of Tarsus. As he was dying, Stephen prayed to God to receive his spirit, and further asked God not to hold the sin against his killers.

Stephen "fell asleep," or died. Other believers buried Stephen and mourned his death.

Under Roman law, Stephen's death was illegal. The Sanhedrin was not authorized to impose the death penalty, but the stoning appeared to be the result of mob action.

> Stephen was the first martyr of the Christian church. His final words were similar to Jesus' last words on the cross. Stephen was the only one to say Jesus was standing, instead of sitting, at his Father's right hand.

Today, people still persecute Christians. Stephen knew what he believed and was able to defend it. Are you as well-prepared as Stephen to defend against unbelievers' attacks on Jesus?

Two things happened as a result of the death of Stephen.

> First, a man named Saul began a vicious personal persecution of the Way, as the early Christian church was called.

> Second, Jesus struck down Saul on the Damascus Road, converting him into the Apostle Paul, one of the greatest missionaries in the history of the church.

Paul became another martyr of the early church. While traveling throughout the Roman Empire on numerous missionary journeys, Paul formed countless close friendships and made some serious enemies. Knowing that severe hardship was in his future, he met with many believers for what he assumed would be one last time.

Acts 21:4-14 (CEV)

⁴ We looked up the Lord's followers and stayed with them for a week. The Holy Spirit had told them to warn Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. ⁵ But when the week was over, we started on our way again. All the men, together with their wives and children, walked with us from the town to the seashore. We knelt on the beach and prayed. ⁶ Then after saying good-bye to each other, we got into the ship, and they went back home.

⁷ We sailed from Tyre to Ptolemais, where we greeted the followers and stayed with them for a day. ⁸ The next day we went to Caesarea and stayed with Philip, the preacher. He was one of the seven men who helped the apostles, ⁹ and he had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

¹⁰ We had been in Caesarea for several days, when the prophet Agabus came to us from Judea. ¹¹ He took Paul's belt, and with it he tied up his own hands and feet. Then he told us, "The Holy Spirit says that some of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will tie up the man who owns this belt. They will also hand him over to the Gentiles." ¹² After Agabus said this, we and the followers living there begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

¹³ But Paul answered, "Why are you crying and breaking my heart? I am not only willing to be put in jail for the Lord Jesus. I am even willing to die for him in Jerusalem!"

¹⁴ Since we could not get Paul to change his mind, we gave up and prayed, "Lord, please make us willing to do what you want."

Paul was going to Jerusalem because of the guidance of the Spirit (20:22). Those who loved Paul pleaded with him not to go because the Spirit had revealed to them that Paul would be captured there and they anticipated Paul would also be killed there.

> Paul trusted in the Lord's plan for his life, and this gave him the resolve to supersede the warnings of his friends and to focus on the call of the Lord.

The predictions made by Agabus in Acts 21:10-11 were correct. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and spent a couple of years imprisoned in Caesarea before finally being shipped to Rome, where he remained under house arrest for a couple more years. Jesus promised that when we lose our life we will truly find it. Surrendering his life for God's purposes was Paul's ultimate goal. Will you make it yours?

Philippians 1:18-21

¹⁸All that matters is that people are telling about Christ, whether they are sincere or not. That is what makes me glad. I will keep on being glad, ¹⁹ because I know that your prayers and the help that comes from the Spirit of Christ Jesus will keep me safe. ²⁰ I honestly expect and hope that I will never do anything to be ashamed of. Whether I live or die, I always want to be as brave as I am now and bring honor to Christ. ²¹ If I live, it will be for Christ, and if I die, I will gain even more.

Total surrender lessens the sting of death as we become confident in the power of God to fit us for eternity.



KEY APPLICATION: What difference does this make in the way I live?

FROM THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS by Randy Frazee

We daily open our hands and surrender all we have to God.

While the concept of surrender is quite familiar in most churches, the biblical connotation must be continually driven home to both remind and prompt us to daily “lay down” our blatant rebellion and self-centered agendas, while we “lift our hands” to abdicate control and hand over all authority to God.

To surrender means to give up the battle of the flesh, to give over control of your life, and to abandon your rights. The battle, control, and rights all come from the same place — the sinful nature. Declaring surrender is handing over your heart and life fully to Jesus, as you declare, *Lord, this is no longer my life, but yours; no longer my will, but yours; no longer my plan, but yours. I give my life to you, my life for you.*

We offer every moment, thought, and activity of our lives as a sacrifice to God.

We should be willing to die for God, but he's not asking us to be a “dead sacrifice”; he wants us to be a “living sacrifice.” Frankly, offering our lives as a dead sacrifice might be a bit easier. Someone once wisely said, “The problem with living sacrifices is they keep crawling off the altar.”

In light of what God has done to give us life, we should offer ourselves as living sacrifices back to him.

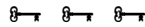
We will serve God in any way he desires.

The first two application points have to do with the mind and heart uniting around a new life and identity. Service is the outward display of the new lifestyle. [God] walks with you as a friend and invites you to work with him as a team.

The Christian whose life is continually yielded to God in surrender, sacrifice, and service will be not only a living witness but also a world changer.

To totally surrender, submitting to Christ's authority and dedicating our lives to his service, will bring us into the company of some of the greatest humans to ever walk the planet — the heroes of our faith (Hebrews 11:1 – 12:3). Let us echo the words of one of those — the apostle Paul.

I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.
Acts 20:24



A Little Something Extra:

Paraphrased from ALLABOUTFOLLOWINGJESUS.ORG

Surrender to God - A Choice for All of Us

Adam and Eve were given a choice to surrender to God. Had they chosen to surrender the longings of their hearts to God, it's possible that we may all be living eternally on a perfect earth, right here and now. Tragically, Adam and Eve did not choose that path. And because of that first act of disobedience, our hearts have become more and more prone to selfishness with each generation.

Before you decide to blame every problem throughout history on Adam and Eve, though, it's important to consider that we are all given the same choice they were given. It's just that they were the first ones to blow it.

Surrender to God - Why it's the Superior Choice

So, what's the point of surrendering to God? Because God loves His creation, He hasn't cast us from paradise forever. He continues to give us a choice. The world around us may be suffering the results of sin, but each person still has the opportunity to choose to obey God. As long as we have breath, we have that choice.

Look back again at the story of Adam and Eve. If they had surrendered to God, rather than listening to the serpent and their own desires, it's possible our world would not be suffering the consequences. It is clear that what God desires for us is far better than any momentary gain-but we can only know that victory if we surrender our desires, our "rights" to God. Again this question needs to be answered: "What is it that you desire today? What "right" are you clinging to, even though deep down inside you know you'd be better off if you gave it up?"

Surrender to God - A Daily Choice

Surrender to God, obey His commands for your life, and you can know the life of abundance that He came to offer. Hold on to your rights, to what you think you own or should have, and you may be happy with a possession or two for a while; you may even have some temporary relief from stress or longing. But what of the end result?

Victory through Christ is within our grasp, if we choose to surrender to God whatever has a stranglehold on us. Obey Him, even if you don't really want to right now, and discover the genuine, eternal satisfaction that can only come from surrendering to God.

Surrender to God is a choice we must make with every breath. Do a few deep breathing exercises right now-God's way in, my way out.