



TAKE UP THY SWORD



A newsletter with hope and encouragement from the Holy Bible

For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword... (Hebrews 4:16)

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Sweet Surrender

Plow up the hard ground of your hearts! Do not waste your good seed among thorns. O people of Judah and Jerusalem, surrender your pride and power. Change your hearts before the LORD... (Jeremiah 4:3-4, NLT).

To Christians, it should seem strange that 'victory' is considered the opposite of 'surrender.' We know that giving our life to the Lord through salvation, the first real act of surrendering to God, only results in the agony of defeat for the enemy! Another antonym for surrender is 'fight,' and who would dare to quarrel with their own Creator? Let's meditate on these instructions:

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up (James 4:7-10).

Although some aspects of submission don't sound too 'sweet,' Paul said that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18)! There are several scriptures in the New Testament which mention submission to our spouses, parents, and those who have authority over us. But we also read in Romans 10:3 that we need to submit to the "righteousness of God." A few chapters earlier, we received this directive:

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God (6:12-13).

So why do we need to completely surrender all that we are and all that we have to the Lord? Perhaps the answer is revealed by the fact that the King James Version of the Holy Bible uses the concept of 'circumcision of the heart' in lieu of surrender! I imagine that with every layer of 'flesh' we pull off, the Holy Spirit in us becomes stronger and more evident. This promise in Deuteronomy lets us know that we do have help during this procedure:

And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live (30:6).

Because I have learned to 'let go and let God,' I am able to proclaim each night: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety" (Ps 4:8). Here are four P's to put in God's hands so we can find rest in the midst of life's storms:

PRESSURE ➤ *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved (Ps 55:22).*

PLANS ➤ *Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass (Ps 37:4-5).*

PURSE ➤ *Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine (Prov 3:9-10).*

PAST ➤ *Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert (Isa 43:18-19).*

Romans 12:1 (NIV) says to "offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." And while we're giving ourselves in service and obedience, including prayer and fasting, we must also offer up the sacrifice of praise and worship from our soul and spirit. For Jesus reminded us in Matthew 26:41 that "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Even a mouthpiece for the Lord can go astray at times:

The story of Jonah and the whale is short yet powerful. God told him to go to the city of Nineveh and prophesy against the people because of their wickedness. But instead, Jonah attempted to run away from the Lord's presence by sailing to Tarshish. His disobedience could've killed everyone onboard as God sent a storm their way. They eventually threw him overboard to calm the sea where "the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah" (1:17). Jonah humbled himself in prayer after three days inside the whale, so it spit him out on dry land. When he finally obeyed and went to Nineveh, the people repented at his preaching so God cancelled their punishment. Then Jonah was upset that the Lord was merciful, and he couldn't understand the intricate design. We must learn to surrender without any fear, just simply "doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph 6:6)!

THUS SAITH THE LORD: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house... to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5).

PRAYER: ... *Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee (Ps 143:8).*

"Be encouraged in the law of the Lord" (2 Chron 31:4):

2 Chronicles 30:8-9; Isaiah 1:19; Daniel 3:28; Mark 3:35; John 5:30; Romans 6:18-19; Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 5:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4,7; Hebrews 10:36

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