

“Finding our Future in our Past and Living the Eternal in the Temporal”
2 Chronicles 20:1-30

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Title: Jehoshaphat sought the LORD through Surrenderance
Text: 2 Chronicles 20:5-13 (v. 12)

Introduction:

This morning I would like us to consider the last of four ways that express how Jehoshaphat sought the Lord.

Jehoshaphat acknowledged his complete dependency on God. He recognized that He can't but God can. We have made the idea of surrenderance some kind of deeper Christian living. Surrendering to God simply affirms your own inability and His complete sufficiency. Typically we do not surrender until we are confronted by something that is larger than ourselves. We often have to come face to face with our own limitations before we are willing to surrender before God. Surrenderance is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that He is working in us and through us to those around us.

“O our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You” (2 Chron. 20:12).

As an individual I am called to surrender, and as the pastor of this fellowship and a member of the elder council I am calling this fellowship to church wide surrenderance. Why would we surrender? Surrenderance is not a declaration of our commitment or devotion but of our contrition and desperation. We surrender because we are a needy people.

It is unfortunate that surrenderance is often defined by the next level of spiritual growth. Or labeled by the statements, “Are you completely surrendered to God,” or “Are you fully surrendered to God,” or “Are you willing to obey God in everything,” or perhaps “What are you holding on to that is keeping you from being fully surrendered?” Such ideas make surrenderance something unique or special or different. The idea of surrenderance is no different than that of repentance/confession, fasting, and prayer. Like the previous three ideas, surrenderance is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that He works in us and through us to those around us.

Surrenderance is captured in the statement of Jehoshaphat when he said, “We are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You” (2 Chron. 20:12).

Have you ever been confronted by impending destruction? Have you ever wondered when the night would give way to the morning light? When you find yourself despairing, diseased, and dysfunctional, it is then that you must surrender to the sovereignty of God in the details of life. Is this not what Jehoshaphat did in verses 5 and 6? If you do not surrender to God, then you will stand in opposition to Him (and you will always lose).

Like our previous studies, I would like to ask three questions that will hopefully allow us the platform to understand this idea better. First, “What does it mean to surrender?”

I. What does it mean to surrender?

A. Biblical surrenderance is not about us, but about Him.

It is not to show how “dedicated” we are, but how delicious and satisfying He is. When Abraham was called upon by God to offer up his son Isaac in Genesis 22, there was nothing pleasant about the demand or the obedience that it required. The purpose was not to see how dedicated Abraham or Isaac was but to show that God is worthy of such sacrifice (Gen. 22:12). Abraham and Isaac saw this. They saw a God who is greater than life itself. Abraham believed God (Heb. 11:17).

B. Biblical surrenderance is not sought but embraced.

You cannot create the context for it to happen. He creates the context and you embrace the event as coming from Him. This is a part of biblical surrenderance. When Noah was called upon to build an ark for the saving of humanity in Genesis 6, it was not sought but embraced. Noah had only two options. He was either to believe God or stand in rebellion against Him. Only one choice would result in life. The other would culminate in death.

Surrenderance is not invited, but welcomed when it comes. We do not seek surrenderance, but affirm its presence. Surrenderance happens when we are confronted by an enemy that is greater than our ability to withstand. In the absence of surrenderance you have annihilation and irreconcilable agony. You might stand defiant before your inevitable destruction, but your pride is a work of the flesh and not the fruit of the Spirit.

C. Biblical surrenderance happens in the context of desperation.

It is the kind of desperation that brings us to the end of ourselves. These are the circumstances that show us for what we are. They bring forth weakness, in order that we might see His strength. They show us our need, so that we might see His resources. This is where we see King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles

20:12. He saw who he was against the encroaching armies and chose God. The context forced the issue.

Surrenderance happens when we come to the end of ourselves and the beginning of God. Surrenderance affirms our own inability and His complete sufficiency. Surrenderance say, “I can’t, but Jesus can.” Surrenderance sees repentance/confession, fasting, and prayer as the fruit of the Holy Spirit and not the work of the flesh.

- D. Biblical surrenderance happens when we come face-to-face with our own limitations and His complete sufficiency and we choose Him.

God always wins, but when we choose Him our enjoyment in the moment becomes magnified. He is always the best and wisest choice. This is what drove Moses in his choice between the reproach of Christ and the treasures of Egypt (Heb. 11:26). He saw that in Christ there were greater riches than anything else this world has to offer.

- E. Biblical surrenderance is a dynamic condition.

It is not a once-for-all decision. Each event that pushes you to the brink of despair is yet another opportunity for you to say, “I can’t, but Jesus can.” This is how life is to be lived. Each moment of every day exists to show us our need of Him.

This is how Paul saw the Christian life. Paul would say, “I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31). He would go on to say, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Paul saw the reality of God larger than the temporal trappings of this earthly existence. Everything Paul possessed he considered to be rubbish when compared to the “greater riches” of Christ (Phil. 3:7, 8).

Even in the most gratifying situations, even these moments, exist to show us how wonderful He is. Their ability to gratify on a finite level only tells us that there is something or rather someone who is the substance of which this is only the shadow.

- F. Biblical surrenderance is built on the absolute sovereignty of God over all things created, the total depravity of man, and the complete sufficiency of Jesus Christ and His cross work.

These three ideas form the context for biblical surrenderance.

1. Knowing that God is in control of all things enables me to see the situation for what it is (2 Chron. 20:5).

He has caused this moment (no matter how painful it might be) to happen for His glory and my good (Job 1:21). I might not feel this to be true or even like it, but I can embrace it with my mind as true.

2. One of the reasons as to why He has brought this moment to pass is for me to see my own inadequacy (2 Cor. 12:9).

This inadequacy is a result of my personal depravity. It is my total depravity that tells me regularly that “I can’t, but Jesus can.” If I could live my life independent of Him, then why would I need Him? If I could save myself, then why would I need a Savior? This is what the moments of life afford me. They afford me the platform for me to see who I am in the absence of Him.

3. The second reason as to why He has brought this moment to pass is for me to see His complete sufficiency (1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 6:14; Phil. 3:8).

This sufficiency is two-fold. It exists first in who Jesus Christ is, and then secondly, in what He has done and is doing.

- a. Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ, because of who He is, is enough in this life and in the life to come. My problems force me to accept this truth. Jesus Christ is God, fully and completely. There is nothing in all of creation that corresponds perfectly with the Creator. All things created are reflections, but nothing matches Him perfectly, except God.

- b. What has He done and is doing?

The cross declares His vicarious sacrifice. He died in order that I might live. His death conquers my inability. Currently He is my advocate and intercessor. He is the one who enables me to exist. Not just live and enjoy and engage, but to actually live. In the absence of His ever present activity, my life as I know it would cease. It would immediately vaporize and show itself for the slight vapor that it is.

My problems show me this. They show me a Savior who is glorious and a work that is incomprehensible. He loves me. Biblical surrenderance embraces this.

There is nothing mystical or spooky about biblical surrenderance. It is not a small subset established by the committed believer. It is simply our response as His children to our Father, Savior, and Lord. When you are confronted by the truth claims of Christ in your moments of being overwhelmed, you say “yes to Jesus.” This is biblical surrenderance, nothing more and nothing less.

This brings us to our second point in our study.

II. Why would I surrender?

The question before us is not “Why would we surrender,” but rather “Why would we not surrender?”

Surrenderance places us in a position of grateful usability. God will use us regardless as to whether or not we surrender, but walking with God is far more enjoyable than being dragged by God. Either way the purpose of God shall stand. Surrenderance enables us to live humbly and gratefully before God and man.

Surrenderance is not passive compliance or broken resolution. Surrenderance is active conformity and refreshingly rejuvenating.

This brings us to our third point in our study.

III. What can I expect when I surrender?

Surrenderance takes the burden from ourselves and places it squarely on God. To surrender is to take our rightful place as a creature before the Creator God. When I surrender, I acknowledge God as God and cease seeking to be something I am not.

As just noted, surrenderance places us in a position of grateful usability. God will win with us or without us, but I would rather be a part of what God is doing willingly than find myself used as a negative example of what defiance looks like.

APPLICATION: (Where do we go from here? What is the NEXT STEP?)

So what is the next step?

First, when you face a problem see it for what it is – an opportunity to make much of Him.

Second, when you face a problem recognize that you can't fix it.

Third, when you face a problem see that He is the beginner and finisher of your faith.

Are you willing to submit yourself under the sovereign hand of God as He works out His eternal purpose? This is where you say, "I can't, but Jesus can." He is the one who will bring His purpose to completion, not you.

Finally, *embrace Him and His work in the moment.*

This is what gives you rest in your moments. They come when we say, "I can't, but Jesus can!" Can you start resting in the sovereignty of God even when He takes you down difficult paths and takes from you things that are good but not the best? Surrenderance is easy when everything appears to be going your way, but what about when the night seems long and the pain unremitting? Are you willing to trust even when you do not understand, and live even when you cannot see ahead?

God is asking us to trust Him. This is easy to say and write, but difficult to flesh out in every decisions and events.

Over the last four studies we have considered four aspects of seeking the Lord. Repentance/confession, fasting, prayer, and surrenderance are four fruits of the Holy Spirit that He is working in us and through us. My desire is for me as an individual and us as a fellowship to consider these four fruits and ask the Holy Spirit to weave these expressions into our everyday life.

I would like to give you some thoughts that will guide you in your pursuit of God in 2007.

- Avoid perfectionist thinking. Don't make absolute resolutions. Remember, the purpose of God is perfect, but this perfection is being worked through imperfect instruments.
- View setbacks as lessons for growth. Failure is never fatal. No one bats a thousand.
- Don't keep your resolutions to yourself. Create accountability. Remember, Christianity is built for community.