

JUNE 2005 – *Unconditional Surrender*

Have you ever felt a deep longing in your heart to be more like Jesus Christ? Many of us desire a deep inner transformation of our souls, but the change we hope for seems to elude us. One of the main reasons for this is that we do not understand the root of our problem and therefore cannot see the way out of it. Our problem is simple: a strong disposition toward personal autonomy, the desire to be our own master and have our own way in life. The path out is also simple: the unconditional surrender of ourselves to God and to his purposes. A few surrender at conversion, but most seem to come to it later in life. Tragically, some never do.

C.S. Lewis describes our problem and the way out of it in his book, *The Problem of Pain*:

Now the proper good of a creature is to surrender itself to its Creator—to enact intellectually, volitionally, and emotionally, that relationship which is given in the mere fact of its being a creature. When it does so, it is good and happy. Lest we should think this a hardship, this kind of good begins on a level far above the creatures, for God Himself, as Son, from all eternity renders back to God as Father by filial obedience the being which the Father by paternal love eternally generates in the Son. This is the pattern which man was made to imitate—which Paradisal man did imitate—and wherever the will conferred by the Creator is thus perfectly offered back in delighted and delighting obedience by the creature, there, most undoubtedly, is Heaven, and there the Holy Ghost proceeds. In the world as we now know it, the problem is how to recover this self-surrender. We are not merely imperfect creatures who must be improved: we are, as Newman said, rebels who must lay down our arms.

The first answer, then, to the question why our cures should be painful, is that to render back the will which we have so long claimed for our own, is in itself, wherever and however it is done, a grievous pain. Even in Paradise I have supposed a minimal self-adherence to be overcome, though the overcoming, and the yielding, would there be rapturous. But to surrender a self-will inflamed and swollen with years of usurpation is a kind of death.¹

Indeed, it is a kind of death. But, if we wish to know Christ more intimately and be transformed into his likeness, there is no other way. We must die daily. It starts with a full surrender of our lives—all we are and all we have—to the Father. Then, with the Holy Spirit's help, we must reaffirm this surrender, choice by choice, as life unfolds before us. Granted, this will sometimes be hard, but it is the most direct path to where we wish to go. And as we follow it, we will come to know Christ evermore deeply and grow in the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control that characterized his life on earth.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

ROMANS 12:1-2 NASB

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), pp. 88-89.