

Br. Allen
Surrender
Fullerton Temple
September 29, 2011

When Br. Allen was in the postulant ashram with Bro. Premamoy there used to be a little saying...you know, he'd always say to the monks: "It's okay, if you can only concentrate for five minutes of every hour of meditation." Then he'd say: "As long as it's the first five minutes." What he meant by that was when we sit to meditate we have to mean business. We don't want to get into that habit where we're used to sitting down and being there for the one hour of meditation just because we're supposed to be. We have to give that time to God. So when we sit down to meditate we put everything else out of our minds and we put our attention on God as much as we can. If we get in the habit of starting our meditations in that way, with that determination, our meditations will keep improving.

When you meditate keep the gaze at the Christ center. Anything that happened today does not matter one bit. Anything that's going to happen tomorrow or the next day does not matter; all that matters is what we're doing when we meditate and that's giving our attention to God.

Today 's topic is Surrender.

Our Guru said: "Only by complete surrender can you make God answer."

So what is surrender? Surrender is an acceptance of God's will in all matters in our lives, not that that is necessarily easy to know what that is, but that surrender is an acceptance of God's will.

And one of the best examples is of surrender that Br. Allen has seen is Sister Gyanamata and there is a letter she wrote in in her book. In the first paragraph of the letter she said: "Above all our wishes must stand the wishes that God's will should prevail."

So this constant wish that "Thy will be done; Thy will be done."

Imagine for a moment that we are really trying to accomplish something. We have a pretty strong desire and we want to accomplish this thing. We feel it's the right thing for us; we really want it to happen.

Now how many of us can honestly stand back and say I am going to do my best to accomplish this God but if it is not Your will that is fine? That's not an easy thing, is it? Because we get these desires; we have this attachment to whatever it is we want and will anybody be able to stand back and say: "If it's not Your will God that's okay." But that's something we have to learn how to do because that's manifesting that Divine Surrender...giving our lives to God completely.

In a continuation in that letter that Gyanamata wrote she said, "Late one afternoon I was kneeling in prayer in the chapel - I was thinking of something that was coming into my life that filled me with

apprehension.” She was being faced with something she didn’t want to face. She said: “I knew that it was not the will of God that I should be saved from the experience. Even at that moment it was moving toward me. Suddenly God told me the prayer He would listen to, and I said quickly: ‘Change no circumstance of my life. Change me.’” [God Alone page 94] So “change no circumstance of my life, change me.

What that is, is surrender to God in a nutshell right there. She has a little advantage. She knew for sure that she was supposed to go through that thing. Again, we don’t always know that, but the main point here and perhaps the biggest aim in attaining surrender is to stop being attached to this creation; to stop looking to the world or the conditions of this world for our happiness. We have been doing that for incarnations and it’s not working for us, right? This world cannot provide lasting happiness. How many times have we been so convinced that if this one thing changes in our life, if I get this one thing, if I get this one thing out of my life everything is going to be just fine. And the next week we are right back on square one again looking at the next thing we’ve got to get in our lives...get out of our lives, right? Looking to this world for happiness doesn't work!

Now, if, this world could provide happiness, surrender would make no sense. If we’ve got something here and we we know it could make us happy, it wouldn’t make any sense to surrender, would it? If we got a way to get happiness we’d go and get it because that is what our soul is going to be satisfied with...a complete never ending lasting happiness...and we have to get it. There’s only one-way to get that and that’s by knowing God. That’s the one thing we really need to surrender to and not get caught up in anything else.

Our true nature within us right now and it will never change is pure never ending joy or bliss. That is the only thing that will ever satisfy us; the only thing that will give us the lasting happiness that we want.

So we have to turn within and see our true natures, which are a part of God. There is no way around that. Now, Gyanamata is describing that experience when she said: “Change no circumstance of my life change me.” She said: “There are experiences that the soul never forgets but which can not properly be expressed. My prayer was answered instantly. I was changed. Trying to put this into words, all I could compare it to was a window being opened in an overheated room, and a cool, refreshing breeze blowing in.”

She closes with, “It is not getting our own way that gives joy; it is attunement with the Divine Will.” “It is not getting our own way that give joy; it is attunement with the Divine Will.” That is true spiritual surrender. She’s setting a good example for us.

So ultimately surrender, again, is about giving ourselves completely to God. It’s letting go of this creation and all of its attractions and turning to God and saying: “All right God, You win. You are all that really matters. I will not longer look to this world for happiness. I am only going to look to You.”

As soon as we can make that complete surrender to God...to make that commitment to Him, God turns

to us and He says: "Well, you win, too, my child, because when you surrender to Me, I surrender Myself to you. You will now have eternal happiness through My ever new joy."

Giving ourselves to means that God gives Himself to us. We become aware of that spark of God within...that permanently satisfying ever-new joy when we give ourselves to God. That's what we get.

So how do we learn to surrender, especially to God? Our Guru said: "There is no way to find God's love other than to surrender to Him. Master your mind so that you may offer it to Him."

"Master your mind..." and we're right back to meditation again, right? Probably every service everybody hears about meditation. I know I mention it every single time. But everything on the spiritual path, at least on the Self-Realization Fellowship path, always seems to come back to that cornerstone of meditation, right? Because Master is saying we have to master our mind so we can offer it to God.

Now we all know the importance of surrendering ourselves to God in word but we actually must be able to give God our all. And that means turning to God with our full attention and then saying: "God, I give myself to You."

Now if we have not gained that ability through meditation to really concentrate our minds and give our minds fully, we may say, "God, I give myself to You" and...but maybe He's only getting 20%. But 80%...there's a lot of desires back here in this world that are still pulling us in. We think they can make us happy. We're doing the best we can. God appreciates whatever we give, even if it's only 1%. But it's through meditation that we can give God our all.

In the Bible it says in Exodus 20, 2 - 5: "I, the Lord thy God am a jealous God." Now that does not mean that God gets angry or upset with us if we do not give him our whole attention. Not at all. When He says He's a jealous God, He simply means if you want that gift of ever-new joy and happiness to be found in realizing your oneness with Me, you must give yourself to Me 100%. That's what He's asking and meditation helps us gain the ability to do that.

Master said: "God is not moved by blind prayer or flattery, but He can be moved by law and devotion and the love of your heart. Together with the practice of the meditation techniques you must surrender yourself to God.

We have the meditation techniques but we also have that love and that devotion. We learn to manifest that; we learn to express that and develop that too. They go together. That's how we progress back toward God.

What might we do if we're having trouble or struggling to surrendering to God?

Live in the present and even take that one step further; give that present moment to God somehow. Somehow offer that moment to God. Now there have been books written on just living in the present

moment. Even if they don't bring God into the picture, it has changed people's lives completely.

Master said our minds can be overloaded. Because not only are we living now but we're worried about the past, usually feeling guilty about something that happened a little while ago or yesterday or the week before, right? Guilt's a big thing that has no place in our lives, Br. Allen promises us. Move on...learn the lesson and move on! Or we're worried about something that's to come. And we actually spend more of our time living there than in the present. And Master said when you add those three loads together they are just way too much for our minds to handle. Our minds are ridiculously powerful; they can accomplish almost anything when they're concentrated. But you start loading a bunch of stuff on our minds they get all stressed out and become kind of wimpy. They really are.

Think about any time you are really stressed out. We're not worried about right now, are we? We're worried about something that happened yesterday or whatever or something that's coming.

Master said to concentrate 100% on everything you do. He didn't say to concentrate 100% on the most important things in life; he said to concentrate 100% on everything you do! So what are we thinking about when we're brushing our teeth in the morning or when we're washing our hands? Think about it. If we're really focused on what we're doing, are those worries about something that's coming up going to be bothering us? There's no room in our minds; our minds are concentrated on what we're doing. So those worries start falling away. That stress starts falling away from our lives. We're simplifying our interior life and calming down so we can start feeling God's presence.

Remember we have nothing to attain. That presence of God is within us. We are a part of that; that can never change. So we're only trying to calm down so we can feel that. So living in the present can be a very big thing--very calming.

Master said: "I live from minute to minute, day to day. I know only the joy of living inside...complete resignation to Him [or God]." "I live minute to minute..." that's living in the present.

Another good thing we can do is to do everything as a service to God. That means constantly reminding ourselves...mean everything...or affirming, we could say, "Thy will be done." There's certain humility in that. Anytime we express humility that ego is getting pushed out. And remember what Rajarsi said: "When the ego steps in, God steps out and when the ego steps out, God steps in." It's an automatic law. When we start manifesting humility God will come into our lives, no doubt about it.

There's a certain humility in that. But at the same time, we don't always know what the right thing to do is, right? That's the big kicker here. So what are we going to do. The worst thing we can do, and we've all met people like this, when they don't know the right thing to do they are afraid to act. And they won't act on something for days or months or years--something they need to do something about, one way or the other. We can't let ourselves get paralyzed by this fear. At some point we just have to make the best decision we can and go forward.

Br. Allen has told this story before. When he was a little kid he used to love watching Kung Fu. He loved this thing. He was only about nine or ten years old when this thing was in full bloom and it was on after his bedtime but that's the one exception his mom would always make and let him watch Kung Fu at night. So he was supposed to be in bed but he would go and sit and watch that TV show and never budge that whole hour cause he just loved it! And there was one good little story on trying to decide what to do or even surrender. It might even be a better example of surrender in what we should do. But...The young king came...the Kung Fu guy. He was with his master and they were near a stream and he said, "Master, how do I know in life whether I should be like the rock and stand against the current or be like the leaf and just flow with the stream?" Basically he's asking how will I know what the right thing to do is. How do I know when to surrender and when not to? And the master said... simply said: "When you don't know, the doing will surely teach you." His point was make a decision and go with it.

And we all know when we start going a certain direction we start getting feed back, whether it's our conscience or our intuition or whatever it is and then we can adjust our decisions, if necessary. Even if it was totally wrong, we can adjust our decision. A person who is willing to act, make the best decision they can and then make adjustments as they go, can make probably a dozen mistakes, BUT can get more accomplished than the person who is afraid to act until they know exactly what the right thing to do is. Those adjustments come very quickly. We learn very quickly when we start doing something. Let's not think we have to know the right thing all the time before we act because we'll never do anything if that's the case.

Our Guru said, "When I started on the spiritual path, I supposed that only good would happen to me but I found that many difficult experiences also came. Then I reasoned. Because I have loved God so deeply, I've expected too much from Him. From now on I will say, 'Lord, let Thy will be done.' Severe trials came but I held to the thought, "let Thy will be done". I wanted to accept whatever He sent my way and He always showed me how to be victorious in every test."

It doesn't sound like Master did everything perfectly every time but God will show us once we start on our path of action and we can always make those adjustments. Just because we surrender doesn't mean life's going to become easy. It will be easier but it's not necessarily going to be easy. Master said even when he was saying, "Thy will be done" life still was very difficult. He had severe trials. We're going to have them, too. That's just part of life. But in the end he said God always showed him how to be victorious in every test. Again the same rules apply to us. God will show us also...we're no different.

If we're struggling with surrender see God as the doer. Now this is another affront on our ego, isn't it? We're part of God; we really don't do much, when you think about it, because God is Infinite. There's not room for anything else. So God is the sole doer.

Again, we are pounding our ego down and that humility is coming in a little bit. God can manifest more in our lives. In Sayings of Yogananda there's a little story where Master asked a disciple to go to do some work at a retreat in the desert. And the disciple was reluctant, worrying about all the duties that he was leaving behind and our Guru told him: "Your new work at the desert retreat should be your only concern

now. Do not feel attachment to anything! Accept change with equanimity and perform in the spirit of divine freedom whatever duties come your way.” Then Master goes on: “If God were to say to me today, come home. Without a backward glance I would leave all my obligations here - organization, buildings, plans, people – and hasten to obey Him. Running the world is His responsibility. He is the doer, not you or I.”

So seeing God again as the doer again loosens the grip that our egos have on us and also our attachments will drop away. Listen to what Master is saying here. Master was attached to nothing. Nobody loved more than Master; the people he was with and everything else. It’s impossible to love more than our Guru did. But if God had asked him to go he said without a backward glance I would be gone. So he had that love without that selfish attachment that we’re all so used to. That’s an example for us that we have to try to follow. If we’re humble and nonattached and willing to surrender, it’s a given. It really is.

Surrender and humility are intertwined so closely; they are not inseparable. You can’t have one without the other. And that’s why surrender is difficult to attain. It requires humility and it’s a direct affront on our ego which has had a grip on us for however many incarnations, which is millions, and we’re trying to say: “Hey, I’ve had enough of you now, it’s time to go.” So that’s not going to be an easy chore.

If you're having trouble surrendering, look at your life and see where the humility is lacking or where the ego has a big, strong control of your life. That’s what stops us from being able to surrender.

Our Guru said: “Only by complete surrender can you make God answer. He is very humble. Only in humbleness can you find Him.”

Br. Allen mentions how important it is for us not to get down on ourselves. Surrender is not easy for all the reasons he already talked about. He says if he got down on himself every time he didn’t surrender to something or that surrender was lacking, he’d be a basket case. He learned that a long time ago...it’s like we do the best we can and we let it go. That’s all we can expect. That’s all God expects. It doesn’t really matter if the best we can is seemingly minimal to us. If we do our best in God’s eyes it’s just as good as a saint who’s doing their best. That is really all He’s looking for is the effort on our part. And when we make that effort remember Master said 25% of our progress is due to our effort; and for every 25% we give our Guru gives 25%. And he said that for every 25% the guru gives, God gives 50%. That doesn’t mean we can take it easy and give a poor effort; we have to give our 100% to get that 25. But still, the point is, we’re not alone here. We’re not working alone. God and Gurus are always behind us, pushing us along and helping us to progress.

The spiritual path becomes a lot more pleasant when we learn to accept doing our best and giving it to God for that. If all we have to offer God some days is our failures, let’s offer him our failures. It’s okay. He doesn’t care.

Our Guru said, "Forget everything else. Just lay yourself at God's feet. There is no time like the present to surrender yourself unto Him.