

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

Noah Brooks in his book *Abraham Lincoln*, described the end of the Civil War. The spring of 1865 opened with every prospect of a speedy and complete ending of the rebellion. Sherman's march to the sea had opened the Mississippi and divided the dying remnants of the confederacy. Fort Fisher had been captured by General Terry and virtually closed the last Atlantic port through which the rebels could receive supplies from abroad. The scattered remnants of the rebel army rallied around General Lee for the defense of the rebel capital.

Lee, at last, sought an interview with Grant seeking terms of peace and hoping that some compromise could be achieved. Lincoln ordered the Secretary of War to send a message to Grant to hold no conference with Lee except for the purpose of receiving a capitulation of his army. There must be no discussion of any political question.

On the 27th of March a conference of Lincoln, Grant, and Sherman was held on board a steamer in the James River near Grant's headquarters. Lincoln was informed that one more fierce, bloody battle would be necessary. Lincoln cried out: "Must blood be shed? Cannot this bloody battle be avoided?" By the grace of God, it was. But not because Lincoln wavered in his resolve.

Sheridan by ten days rapid marching had cut off Lee's escape southward. The army of General Lee was therefore completely encircled. Lee sent an imperative message to Richmond ordering three hundred thousand rations for his starving army. The message fell into Sheridan's hands. He allowed the message to continue and then captured the supplies en route to General Lee. Next, Petersburg fell into the hands of the victorious Union troops. Jefferson Davis, seeing that all was lost fled in disguise from Richmond but was later captured. On Monday morning, April 3, federal troops under the command of Gen. Weitzel hoisted the Union flag over the building in Richmond where the rebel congress once met.

Meanwhile Grant and Sheridan were drawing their lines more closely to Lee, who like a hunted fox turned this way and that in an effort to escape. While Lincoln returned to Washington the Union troops strengthened their advantage and made further resistance suicidal.

Finally, on April 9, 1865 Lee and Grant met face to face in the Court-House of the little village of Appomattox, Virginia. Lee was totally defeated and his surrender was unconditional. Since the rebels were starving General Grant immediately ordered that they be given rations. Since it was the spring of the year the rebel soldiers were permitted to take their horses and return home so that they might prepare the soil for planting. The rebellion was over. The Union was preserved. Slavery was abolished. There was no compromise. There was peace.

In more recent history we have seen the wisdom of complete victory and unconditional surrender. Both Germany and Japan were once our mortal enemies but are now our allies and friends. Again, this harmony came as the result of their total defeat and unconditional surrender.

Korea, by contrast, did not surrender. For whatever reasons a negotiated peace was achieved by means of compromise. Today, N. Korea is still our enemy.

There is, of course, a spiritual application to this principle.

God is the Sovereign of the universe. He is "All Powerful". Peace with God can only be achieved by our surrender. He will not share His glory with another. Neither men nor angels can negotiate a compromise. There is no question. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. When all the universe has been subjected unto Christ, Christ will then turn everything over to God. God will be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:58). He will be eternally honored and will forever be everything to everybody.

Francis Thompson (1859 - 1907) wrote a poem about his own conversion. It was titled the "Hound of Heaven". In that classic work he described how he fled, pleaded, and wept, only to be relentlessly pursued by the love of God. The Hound of Heaven with unhurrying chase, unperturbed pace, and deliberate speed, left him no alternative. Whether his conversion or ours, remember that the pathway to peace involves unconditional surrender!