

# “Never Give Up!” (Part 1)

## 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

**Intro.** – Years ago, Winston Churchill was called upon to speak to a graduating class at his alma mater. After a grand introduction telling of his great accomplishments, Churchill rose and said the following: “Never, never, never give up!” With that, he placed his familiar hat on his head, took his umbrella in hand and left the stage. To this day, there has never been a shorter yet more memorable commencement charge given.

Do you understand the point of Churchill’s address? Does his charge to persist resonate with you? Are Christians called upon by our Lord to cultivate such an attitude?

Not long ago, New York City Transit Company was missing a bus and driver. Authorities searched and found neither. Ten days later the bus AND driver were found in Miami, FL. “I’d had it with the cold weather, the passengers, and my family,” said the driver. “After the last passenger got off, I thought, ‘I wonder what would happen if I just took off driving.’” So that’s exactly what he did until he got to sunny Florida.

Haven’t you felt like that driver on occasion? Perhaps you have a marriage that isn’t always “wedded bliss.” Maybe you’re about ready to throw-in-the-towel when it comes to parenting. Your kids continue to resist, rebel and intimidate you; so, you throw up your hands to surrender saying, “I might as well let them grow up to be spoiled hooligans.” Maybe your job is giving you fits. You might be going through the motions day in and day out, but it has lost its appeal. So why not just take off and *never come back*?

Today, you may be tempted to quit the Christian life. You started with *great expectations* but things haven’t worked out the way you anticipated. Temptations are taking their toll and as you look around you see other brothers and sisters struggling as well. So you think, “Why bother? Why not simply drop out of church, indulge in the world, and live for yourself?”

It has been our observation over many years of ministry that faithful people are not the gifted/flashy ones; instead, they are the ones who don’t quit. They exemplify the kind of person the Apostle Paul was. Twice he says in our text: “*We do not lose heart.*” – i.e. never give up! In this day of burnout, disloyalty and irresponsibility, we really need to hear and apply this passage.

*Purpose: to learn two of four Biblical principles behind never giving up*

How can you and I be more persistent and faithful in our worship and service for Christ?

### I By Being RESPONSIBLE (v 1)

#### A. Responsibility is Our Lot

1. There is a nasty, four-letter word in our society. Mind you, it isn’t a word the FCC has on its hit list. It used to be a good word, a word of honor and nobility, but, we have come to hate it in our culture. The word is DUTY!
2. We live in an *irresponsible* world because we’ve convinced ourselves that all of life is suppose to be pleasurable/fun. I.e if it doesn’t “feel good” quit doing it”...
  - convinced anytime we go against our feelings we’re being cheated/missing...such isn’t true!
3. Much of life IS fulfilling responsibilities – showing up on time, doing your job even if don’t *feel* like doing it, disciplining your kids etc.
  - a. everybody’s enthusiasm runs out on occasion = test of maturity to keep going at these times!
  - b. “I slept and dreamt that life was beauty. I woke and found that life was duty.” (Lord Byron)
  - c. most of the time when I come to the office I enjoy what I do... but there are times I show up simply out of a sense of responsibility...
  - d. most of the time, I come Sunday eager for worship and to teach/preach, but there a a few times, not many, I come out of a sense of duty...
    - 1) sometimes don’t *feel* like singing, smiling or acting like I do.
    - 2) times when I *feel* like getting up in the pulpit and looking back at people the way they look at me – their expressions seeming to say “Just try to reach me, Nichols!” and frankly there are times I really don’t *feel* like trying, but I do because it’s my responsibility.
4. Ecclesiastes 12:13 “*Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*”

- a. we come to worship/serve Christ because Bible says, “*Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some...*” (Hebrews 10:25)
  - b. we smile/shake hands because Bible says, “*Be kind to one another...*” (Ephesians 4:32)
  - c. we sing because Bible says, “*Sing the glory of His name; make His praise glorious.*” (Ps 66:2)
  - d. I preach because Bible says, “*Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season...*” (2 Timothy 4:2).
5. There are times people get over-committed and need a break, but most talk about *burnout* is a smoke screen for irresponsibility.

How we need to develop a better sense of DUTY in spite of our feelings!

#### B. Mercy Gave Us Ministry

1. 4:1 – Paul realized he had responsibility greater than his own feelings or wishes:
  - a. he had a ministry to carry the Gospel to as many people as he could...
  - b. probably times Paul didn’t *FEEL* like going to prison, being flogged, ridiculed/rejected, shipwrecked etc. ... He refused to quit because he had great sense of responsibility/duty.
  - c. Paul acknowledges he had this sense of duty, why? Because of God’s mercy.
2. With this in mind, do you think Jesus went to the Cross because it felt good? He went because this was the task for which He came – to seek and to save that which was lost! (Luke 19:10)
3. Illus. – 1957 Indiana State Police, Oscar Mills seriously injured while in pursuit of a speeder. Wife/kids were called to his side. Mills was in a deep coma. Hours turned into days, and days into weeks. Finally Mills died never gaining consciousness. Know where his wife was when he died? Same place she had been since the accident – right at her husband’s side. There was no communication, affection or sign of hope. She was there out of love, commitment and duty.
4. This kind of duty is more than honorable – it’s the kind of commitment we should have when we grow in our understanding of what Christ did for us at Calvary.
5. Parents the best lesson you can teach your kids is a sense of responsibility. Insist on doing chores... going to school even if they have headache... going to church certainly none different...
  - a. forever grateful to parents made me “tow the line” when came to responsibilities...
  - b. don’t want to force your kids to go school... even church? For every one person not involved in faithful church today because “parents made them go,” there are 20 still involved *because* parents taught them to be responsible

Paul didn’t quit, because he remembered his responsibility. We need to do likewise in light X’s mercy!

## II By Being GENUINE (vv 2-7)

#### A. Genuine Means Being Real

1. People can pretend for only so long – nothing more exhausting than being insincere.
2. Illus. – Butcher had but one chicken left just before closing one day. A woman came in requesting a 3lb chicken. He retrieved his last chicken from the freezer, place it on the scales – 2 ½ lbs. Woman said she really needed 3lb’er. Butcher went back in the freezer and stuffed ice in that last/only chicken. He came back, put it on the scale and sure enough 3lbs. Woman said, “O. I’ve changed my mind. I’ll take both of those chickens.”
3. If you attempt to be something you are not you’ll either exhaust yourself or be discovered which means either way you will not finish; instead, you will quit.
4. To avoid growing weary, you must make a commitment to being authentic/real – Paul writes, “*We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of God.*” (v 2)

#### B. Truth is Never Vague

1. V 7 “*We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.*”
  - a. it was practice back then to hide valuables in unimpressive jars so to divert attention... e.g. Dead Sea Scrolls...
  - b. we’re like those jars – not very impressive with our cracks and imperfections... but it’s not the vessel, it’s the content that is important – i.e. we don’t preach ourselves, we preach Christ!

2. Illus. – heard me refer to J. Cottrell – taught 49 ½ years at Cincinnati Bible Seminary and made a pittance in \$ compared what he could... Stayed through thick and thin. Why? He speaks the truth, he's genuine/authentic/real and you know where he stands. He has staying power!
- C. Acknowledging the True Enemy
1. 4:4 *“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel.”*
  2. Our *archenemy* is ruthlessly seeking to defeat you and me. Bible calls him, “Satan, the Devil, Prince of darkness, god of this age.” All names in stark contrast to names of Mighty God!
  3. 1 Peter 5:8 *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”* He seeks to defeat you and me – make no mistake about it!  
If we wear the name *Christian* let's think, reason and act like learners of Christ! Let's be real!!

**Conclusion:** Don Boyer was a brother in the Lord... A good preaching friend. At our Tuesday preachers' meeting he showed us his new pick-up and talked about retirement... Two days later he fell asleep on I-70 near New Castle and was tragically killed in his new pick-up. His sudden death reminded us of how important it is that every day we be faithful and that we never quit. Why? Because we might be almost home! How critical it is we make every day count. How important it is that we NEVER GIVE UP!