

“Never Give Up!” (Part 2)

2 Corinthians 4:1-18

Intro. – You may have a can of WD-40 around the house. Does anyone know what the WD stands for? It stands for “Water Displacement.” Does anyone know what the 40 refers to? That's how many times they tried to develop an effective formula. They failed 39 times but succeeded on the 40th try. The message is, *don't give up*. Don't quit when you are tired. Don't quit when you fail. Don't quit when you meet obstacles.

Michael Jordan is probably the greatest basketball player in the history of the game, and at one time he was asked about the so-called secret of his success. Jordan answered by saying; "I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I am so successful." In plain English Jordan says the key to his success was persistence.

Although not a good example of a Godly man, Steven King is another example of patience and perseverance. He began writing when he was in second grade. He lived in an upper floor bedroom of his mother's house. His dream was to be published in a magazine. His first manuscript was rejected so he put a nail in his wall and poked the rejection letter on it."By the time I was fourteen (he says) the nail in my wall would no longer support the weight of the rejection slips impaled upon it.

Calvin Coolidge once said: “Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with great talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”

Consider this: Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper editor for lack of ideas. Walt also went bankrupt several times before he built Disneyland. Beethoven's teacher called him hopeless as a composer. Winston Churchill failed the sixth grade. He did not become Prime Minister until he was 62. His greatest contributions came when he was a “senior citizen.” Henry Ford failed and went broke five times before he finally persevered and succeeded.

Let me use all the above to illustrate what was said last week -- 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 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 more 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?

III By Being RESILIENT (vv 8-11)

A. Struck Down

1. Paul had the tremendous capacity to bounce back when confronted with a setback – he knew the pressures of schedules, disappointments of people, and the every pressing money matters... he refused to yield, he refused to give up!
 - a. e.g. stoned at Lystra, dragged out of city and left for dead... miraculously got up...
 - b. personally, I would have said, “That's it! “I'm taking early retirement. I hear the Lord calling me into the automotive industry.”
2. Every Christian life has some bumps/potholes. You can react with either resentment or resilience. Resentful people are brittle – they break and then quit. Resilient have staying power through H.S.
 - Illus. – Knoxville, TN newspaper once had articles about similar situations but opposite reactions. Two young men jilted by their girlfriends: 1) jumped off Henley Bridge leaving a note saying, “...everyone is against me...” 2) wrote out his heartache in a country song – became a hit and he netted \$20,000. Point: make your disappointments pay!

B. But Not Destroyed

1. Paul had resiliency that would not quit – every disappointment was a new door; every interruption was an opportunity, every frustration was stimulation to give greater glory to Christ!
2. Must admire those who when the situation looks bad, are able to make the most of it:
 - a. 1852, California vineyard owners going bust because severe drought. All grapes shriveling on vines. One owner picked anyway, took to market – we’ve been eating raisins ever since!
 - b. Whistler, the artist, wanted to be a soldier, but he failed his chemistry exam at West Point.
 - c. Thomas Edison started selling newspapers on a western railroad, but was fired because he spilled acid in baggage car which caught fire. That fire directed him toward his patent career.
 - d. Michael Jordan was cut from his high-school basketball team when he was a sophomore.
3. Socrates advised a young man to go ahead and get married: “You marry a good woman, you’ll be happy; you marry a bad one, you can turn into a philosopher.”
4. Point: Christians must be resilient, making disappointments, criticisms, the sufferings of life pay good profits to the honor of Christ and His Church!
 - a. we may be knocked down BUT not out – usually use *but* as negative to qualify good things:
 - b. e.g. “It’s a beautiful day, BUT we sure could use some rain.”
e.g. “It’s good to see the church grow, BUT I wonder how much of it is for real.”
 - c. NT examples of how use positively:
 - 1) Acts 12:5 “*Peter was kept in prison, BUT the church was earnestly praying...*”
 - 2) Romans 5:20 “*Sin abounds, BUT grace abounds all the more.*”
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 “*We are and will be struck down BUT we are not destroyed.*”

Brethren and friend, we must learn to be resilient!

IV By Being WATCHFUL (vv 12-18)

A. Selflessness in the Present

1. Remember little Jessica McClure? – 18 month old who fell into a Midland, TX well. Lodged in a 12 inch space, 22 feet beneath the surface... Countless people went without sleep and risked their lives to rescue this little girl.
2. This is the same kind of urgency the Apostle Paul had for the lost – he knew only Christ could spare the lost from the punishment of their sins. If such meant his going without things, prestige, comforts, and enduring hardship, he willing did so that others could be spared – he was selfless!
3. 2 Corinthians 4:15 “*All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.*” – i.e. concern for the lost should motivate a lot us never to quit!

B. Anticipation for the Future

1. Bluntly put, our bodies are wasting away.
 - a. Illus. – refs hate officiating games for 35 and up age groups. Why? Guys used to play think they still can, but they’re older, slower, and don’t want to blame themselves; so blame refs!
 - b. physically speaking life is ebbing away... can’t do a thing about it.
 - c. Illus. – Eugene Christian wrote *How to live to Be One Hundred*” – He died at age 69!
2. Let’s be honest, Paul says – outwardly we’re wasting away... but inwardly we are being renewed day by day...
3. Paul goes on to tell us how to do that – “*So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*”
 - a. Mt. Rushmore, Statue of Liberty, Eiffel Tower, St. Louis Arch, Golden Gate Bridge, Great Wall of China, London Bridge, the Vatican, etc. all be gone someday = unreal world.
 - b. things of the Spirit, things of God are going to last forever = real world

Brethren and friend may we all be watchful people, anticipating the day when time will be no more!

Conclusion: In summary/conclusion, someone has suggested the largest organization in the World is *The Quitters Club*. The reason you have never heard of this club is because they never meet – the members simply

quit. It is comprised of people who face a tough job, a miserable marriage, and difficult health. Rather than face up to these challenges and do the responsible thing, they simply quit. You've heard the saying, "When the going gets tough the... Not in *The Quitters Club*. Their motto is the exact opposite. When the going gets tough – quit!

American Gail Devers won the 100-meter dash by only 6/100 of a second over her four top competitors in 1992 Olympics. Gail suffers from Grave's disease. Just one year before she won the Olympic gold, Gail came within two days of having both feet amputated. After surviving that scare, she began to train and push herself toward her goal. Her determination and *persistence* won the day. Who would have thought the fastest woman in the world was the same woman who almost lost her feet. Gail Devers was anything but a quitter.

One last sport illustration. A scrawny kid from West Texas attended a small high school. They didn't have a wrestling program, but this kid read a book on wrestling and asked one of the assistant football coaches if he would enter him some of the wrestling matches in that region. The coach agreed to help the kid.

This little guy was neither strong nor skillful, but he did have one enduring quality – the kid refused to give up. He won every single wrestling match by tenaciously holding on to his opponents and wearing them down.

By the end of the season, he was undefeated and made it to the state finals for his weight division. The kid's opponent was a two-time state champ – a bona fide college prospect. As the scrawny kid faced the state champion, the champ made a couple of quick moves and soon had the West Texas kid on his back and was about to pin him. The coach knew his kid was about to lose; so, he turned his head away. Suddenly, the coach heard the roar of the crowd and when he turned around, his kid was on top of the state champ – pinning him to the mat. He had won and was now the state champ in his weight division.

This little guy bounced across the mat and hugged the coach saying, "Coach, I won! I won!" The Coach said, "What happened?" The kid said, "Coach, that guy was good. He had me twisted like a pretzel on that mat. But you know me coach. I never quit. I refused to give up. So, I opened my eyes, and there in front of my face was a big toe. I don't even know if it's against the rules or not, but I bit into that big toe with all my might... and Coach, it's amazing what you can do when you bite your own toe!"

I really like that story. It does such a good job in helping to summarize this passage of Scripture. If you and I are ever tempted to give up on God and His promises, just remember that little guy. Take a grip on the promises of God and never release them--God always honors persistence.

I conclude with these words – Never Give Up!

George Mallory was the famed mountain climber who may have been the first person ever to reach the top of Mount Everest. In the early 1920's he led a number of attempts to scale the mountain, eventually being killed in the third attempt in 1924. Before that last and fatal attempt he had said "I can't see myself coming down defeated." Mallory was an extraordinary climber, and nothing would force him to give up. His body was found in 1999, well preserved by the snow and ice, 27,000 feet up the mountain, just 2000 feet from the peak. Give up he did not. His body was found face down on a rocky slope, head toward the summit. His arms were extended high over his head. His toes were pointed into the mountain; his fingers dug into the loose rock, refusing to let go even as he drew his last breath. A short length of cotton rope – broken – was looped around his waist. When those who had set up camp for Mallory further down the mountain returned to England a banquet was held for them. A huge picture of Mt Everest stood behind the banquet table. It is said that the leader of the group stood to be applauded, and with tears streaming down his face, turned and looked at the picture. "I speak to you, Mt Everest, in the name of all brave men living and those yet unborn" he said. "Mt Everest, you defeated us once; you defeated us twice; you defeated us three times. But Mt Everest, we shall someday defeat you, because you can't get any bigger but we can."

In 1953 two climbers, Sir Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzig Norgay, reached the top.

In Jerusalem there is a Holocaust Museum dedicated to the memory of the millions of Jews who were killed by the Nazis in World War II. It has been said that going through the museum is a very depressing experience because you see these horrible pictures and read the accounts of the ghettos and the concentration camps. But in the midst of all the dark tales of suffering, there is one amazing story of how God can transform horror into hope. In one of the German concentration camps there was a young lady named Rachel. She endured great hardship from being made to work in the snow with inadequate clothing. She watched in horror as many of her friends and family members were killed. Then one day, the guards left unexpectedly. She didn't know the war was over. Later that day some American soldiers arrived to set the prisoners free. One young American soldier told Rachel he had come to rescue her and for her to gather her few possessions. Then he held the door for her and said, "After you, ma'am." Rachel started to cry. He asked, "What's wrong, ma'am?" She said, "I can't remember the last time someone held a door open for me. It's the nicest thing anyone has done for me in a long time." The soldier stayed in touch with Rachel after she was relocated, and they became friends. Later they fell in love and were married. That's what God can do. He can take the most terrible situation imaginable and make something beautiful out of it. Our God is an awesome God and I'm glad He's in control. Whenever you go through tough times, you can either look for the junk or you can look for the joy.