

DON'T QUIT!

February 1995 – LM Service, Ocala, Florida; January 1999 – PM Service, Ocala, Florida

Scripture:

Psalm 73:28

“As for me, I get as close to Him as I can! I have chosen Him; and I tell everyone about the wonderful ways He rescues me.”

Focus: Trust in God during life's changing seasons.

Sooner or later all of us come to an **intersection of contradiction** in this journey that is called LIFE.

In other words, the good seem to suffer
and the wicked seem to prosper.

As someone has said, life is hard; and all of life's music is not in perfect harmony. What starts out to be a symphony becomes a cacophony; and discordant notes often dominate the score.

People may get married with joy, but many do not live happily every after. The fairy tales of our childhood have misled us.

When the unexplainable descends upon us, we wonder what on earth is God doing! Where is God when we are hurting so badly?

The writer in Psalm 73 experienced all of this and more. He had seen enough of life to be bewildered and bitter – even angry. Feeling abandoned, alone, and in despair from cruel circumstances, he began to ask the crucial questions:

Does God realize what is going on down here?
Does God know?
Surely if He knew, He would do something!
Have I been wasting my time?
Why do I take the trouble to be pure?
Perhaps God doesn't care.
Have I kept the faith in vain?
What's the use if it does not matter?

We don't know ALL that happened to the Psalmist, but we know that he simply could not understand the prosperity and good fortune of the wicked and the hardships being experienced by the righteous. It simply did not FIT his scheme of things. Goodness and good fortune should go together; and suffering and wickedness should operate together. If not, then the Psalmist concluded, keeping the faith was a sheer waste of time.

Perhaps you have had similar feelings – expressed or unexpressed. ☺

Let's seek to answer one of life's basic challenges:

HOW DO I KEEP GOING WHEN I REALLY WANT TO QUIT?!

Some insights from Psalm 73 will help us as we struggle to meet the challenge. Concentrate on two words PROBLEM and PERSPECTIVE.

I. PROBLEM

The problem is as old as history.
The wicked prosper; and the good suffer.

PEANUTS cartoon:

Lucy to Charlie Brown:

“I hate everything. I hate everybody.
I hate the whole wide world.”

Charlie Brown:

“But I thought you had inner peace.”

Lucy:

“I do! But I still have outer obnoxiousness!”

As we strive for inner serenity, things about us and beyond us can, if we are not prayerful, leave us bitter. Life seems to break its promises; and many come to the place where they're unwilling to trust another human being and are suspicious about trusting God.

ANYONE can view life through the lens of despair.
ANYONE can look for answers that are flawed.

But the Christian's view of life says:

We are living now!
We are living forever!

The poet Robert Browning:

“If I stoop into a dark tremendous sea of cloud
it is but for a time.
I hold God's lamp close to my breast,
its splendor soon or late will pierce the gloom.
I shall emerge one day.”

The Psalmist (73:28):

**“As for me, I get as close to Him as I can!
I have chosen Him!
I will tell everyone about the wonderful ways
He rescues me.”**

We must ALL come to this conclusion – and the sooner the better!

We struggle with life's chaos:

fires, earthquakes, calamities,
unkept promises, and people who let us down;
but we must, as did the Psalmist, hold on and emerge from our despair and bitterness

DON'T NURSE IT!
DON'T CURSE IT!
DON'T REHEARSE IT!
REVERSE IT!!

Yes, there are problems, but victorious we will be!

Our second word has to do with –

II. PERSPECTIVE

You feel it in Psalm 73. The writer realized that he had lost his perspective. He was focusing on the problems and the inequities; and, if he continued to do so, he would suffer a total loss of faith.

What did he do?
You won't believe it!
HE WENT TO CHURCH!!

That's right!
He went to church in order to get a better perspective!

Paraphrased:

“I'll take my chances with those who are lifting mind and heart to God in worship and prayer rather than cast my lot with the wicked who are prospering and living as if there are no tomorrows.”

Psalm 73:28

“It is good for me to draw near unto God.”

(I'm gonna get as close to Him as I can!)

The secret of life is not what we HAVE, but WHOSE we are – not what we possess outwardly but what we have inwardly!

Our strength is not found in our anger about life breaking its promises, but in our nearness to God who is stronger than our pain and a light for any darkness.

The Psalmist:

**“My perspective – the way I view life – needs changing.
So, I'll go to church. I'll draw near to God.**

In church three things happened.

(1) Psalmist saw clearly that the present is not permanent.

“This too shall pass.”

I.e. Things are constantly changing.
Life is a slippery path and what looks like
Success just might be a failure.

Attorney in Tampa – wealthy, successful, beautiful wife, beautiful children,
beautiful life. He stood at the apex of the Skyway Bridge in St. Petersburg and
plunged into the shark infested waters below. He left this note on the
seat of his late model car:

“I’m standing on the brink of eternity at last,
as reckless of the future as I’ve been of the past.
I’m dead of all ambition; I’m void of every hope.
The toils of life are ending;
and I’m letting go the rope.”

The Spirit is encouraging us to
HOLD ON! HOLD ON!
THE PRESENT IS NOT PERMANENT!

And as the Psalmist worshipped, he came to see things
in a better and definitely a different perspective.

The second thing the Psalmist saw in worship is that –

(2) The Promises of God Are Adequate.

Out of the bitter despair that had engulfed him he said,
“You love me.
You are holding my right hand.
You will keep on guiding me all of my life.”

Because we cannot know the future, we need to have some certainty, some things
that we can trust, some one who will stand for us and with us!

Psalmist:

**“Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire no one on
earth as much as you.”**

So much of what we encounter in the welter of every
day is not worthy of our trust.

We say, as if they were proven reality, that we can trust some things.

You have your list. I have mine.
Here are some of them:

**A. “Laugh and the world laughs with you;
cry and you cry alone.”**

That’s not true!
Crying will always draw a bigger crowd
than laughter any day.

**B. “Every day and every way the world is
getting better and better.”**

Your TV must have gone out of operation.
You haven’t watched the evening news of late.

C. “There’s a light at the end of every tunnel.”

Don’t count on it!
There may be darkness back there; and, in fact,
the light you see may be an on-rushing train.

HERE IS MY LEAST FAVORITE:

D. “Things are never as bad as they seem.”

Dream on, friends.
Things are often worse than they seem.
Dreaming will not alter that reality.

I am not a pessimist from Georgia.
I’m a realist.
I can tell you that many of the things we are
trusting will not stand; and they are not
worthy of our trust.

ONLY GOD, who is sovereign and loving can be trusted.

We must learn to be willing to trust Him even
when we cannot penetrate the darkness
around us or the hurt within us.

I believe our world is made and sustained by a dependable God! A God
who has shown, and is showing, that He will continue to reveal
His love to you and me.

YOU GET A BETTER PERSPECTIVE
WHEN YOU GO TO WORSHIP!

You learn:

The present isn't permanent; and
the promises of God are adequate.

The Psalmist did something else.

3. He Made A Personal Decision To Trust In God!

What others do about God is not your affair.
You have a choice to make and to keep.
It's a personal decision.

C. S. LEWIS:

“Look for yourself and you will find in the
long run hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin
and decay; but look for Christ and you will find
Him, and with Him everything else (good)
thrown in.”

NEVER GIVE UP!

The Psalmist knew that life is what happens to you while you are making other plans.

The sunlight of happiness can turn in a flash to the darkness of despair.
Something we counted on is denied us.

Around us are those utterly uninterested in goodness and truth who seem to prosper.

For example –

A good woman, a wonderful mother, is abandoned by an unfaithful husband;

And –

A useful man is cut down by a dreaded disease, while a
local pimp cruises the city in a stretch limo in the pink of health.

We are angry and bewildered. We try to gain some perspective on it. We don't fully
understand. What shall we do? And here is the essence of this sermon in a sentence:

TRUST IN GOD!

DON'T QUIT!

DON'T EVER GIVE UP!

KEEP ON KEEPING ON!

THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS THE ONLY
WAY TO LIVE!

MAXEY DEAN FILER, a man from Compton, California.
He believed he was born to be a lawyer. He took the bar
exam in California forty-seven times and failed every time.
Thirty-seven years of failing left him feeling pretty low;
but, he took it the forty-eighth time and passed it!
He didn't give up!

DON'T QUIT!
TRUST IN GOD!
NEVER GIVE UP!

Annette, you don't know what you're talking about!

1958	Mother ran me away from home. The wheels on that Greyhound bus seemed to be saying: "Life is a bummer; and you're a loser." But, I went to church, trusted God and didn't quit.
1963	Cancer. Went to church. Trusted God. Didn't quit.
1973	Facial stroke. Went to church. Trusted God. Didn't quit.
1986	Eye Condition – Blephar spasm. Seven years wore adhesive tape. Went to church. Trusted God. Didn't quit.

Are you bragging on yourself?
NO! I'm bragging on God!

And, I'm here to tell you, YOU CAN'T QUIT!
Too many people give up too quickly!
Don't quit!
Go to church! Develop a sense of community.

You have your dreams. Talk about those dreams until you are able to persuade others to
with you to places neither one of you have ever been before – all for the glory of God!

Don't quit!
Go to church!
Trust in God!

WILLIAM COWPER:

God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.
He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take – the clouds ye so much dread
are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head.