The Courage to Keep Going

**KEY PASSAGE:** 2 Timothy 4:1-8  
**SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 32:8 | Proverbs 3:5-6 | John 16:7, 13  

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**SUMMARY**

We're often tempted to give up or walk away when situations become difficult or painful.

But believers are called to follow Christ's example of endurance through hardship. Giving up just doesn't fit who we are in Christ. Despite mistreatment, rejection, conflict, discouragement, loneliness, or seemingly insurmountable problems, the Lord wants us to choose to persevere until He redirects us.

The apostle Paul is a wonderful example of a man who refused to give up. Even at the end of his life, he was still doing what God wanted him to do. While in a Roman prison, he wrote a letter to a young pastor named Timothy, challenging him to follow his example and keep preaching the Word even when the people would eventually refuse to listen (2 Tim. 4:1-8).

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**SERMON POINTS**

The apostle Paul had the courage to keep going despite all the trouble he faced.

Paul demonstrated such courage to persevere because he had:

- **An awareness that God was with him:** In 2 Corinthians 11:22-28, Paul described some of the persecutions, hardships, and pressures he endured—imprisonments, beatings, shipwreck, various dangers, sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, and exposure to the elements—yet through them all he knew the Lord was with him. It’s easy to believe God is with us when everything’s fine, but when times are tough, we must cling to this truth so we won’t become discouraged and give up. Too often people quit right before the Lord opens an opportunity, gives a victory, or changes a situation.

- **The experience of the Lord’s strength within him:** Because Paul depended on the power of almighty God, he could say, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). Today that same divine energy is within every believer through the presence of the Holy Spirit. This means we each have within us the strength to do the will of God. We may not feel it, but it’s there.

  However, having God’s power doesn’t exempt us from trouble. The only way we’ll have the courage to be strong and carry on is to be in the Word of God. If we’ll pray to be strengthened with His power (Eph. 3:16), put on the full armor of God (Eph. 6:11), and believe that God causes all things to work together for our good (Rom. 8:28), we can face whatever is ahead.

- **The assurance of being in God’s will:** Knowing that he was accomplishing what the Lord had called him to do gave Paul the determination to keep going despite hardship and persecution. God had sent him to preach the gospel and reach the Gentiles with the message of salvation in Christ, and he was determined to fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith (2 Tim. 4:7). If we’re going to persist through hard times of doing God’s will, we must trust that He will guide us each step of the way (Ps. 32:8).

- **The overflowing joy of Christ:** Even a Roman jail could not steal Paul’s joy. Since he was fulfilling God’s purposes, he could rejoice. In fact, he described how his circumstances had “turned out
for the greater progress of the gospel” because the entire praetorian guard had heard about Christ (Phil. 1:12).

We’re all quick to rejoice and praise Jesus when our lives are comfortable and pleasant. But when times get hard, many of us are more likely to complain to the Lord than to rejoice in Him. We forget that He’s promised to walk with us and work it all out for our good if we’ll respond with praise and trust.

**An appreciation of the Lord’s life-changing lessons:** The apostle Paul was an awesome student of God’s Word. What he learned not only fills much of our New Testament, but it also filled his heart. That’s why he could respond to trials with joy and keep going. Each situation was a chance to learn valuable spiritual lessons and grow in maturity.

When we don’t understand the Lord’s purposes and trust that He’s working for our good, we won’t see the value of going through hard times. The real question is: are things going God’s way, but we’re simply out of His will? He may be using that tough situation to draw us to Himself and to apply His truths to our lives.

**The fruit God produced through him:** Paul traveled throughout the Roman Empire telling people about Christ and founding churches in various cities. But sometimes false teachers led those churches astray after he left. Paul could have become discouraged and walked away from his ministry, but he didn’t. Instead, he wrote letters of correction and encouragement to the churches. Because he was faithful in fulfilling his calling, the gospel traveled throughout the Roman Empire and is still being proclaimed around the world.

**The hope of the Lord’s promised reward:** We should never give up walking with Christ through difficult times, because there is more to life than our current circumstances. Paul knew that he had a “crown of righteousness” awaiting him in heaven (2 Tim. 4:8). Our heavenly Father has promised to reward each of us, His children, for our faithfulness. He rewards us for raising godly children, loving our spouses, sharing our faith, being diligent in our work, or standing up for the truth.

**The vision of the cross before him:** Paul’s only boast was in the cross of Christ because he knew it was the reason he could survive and keep going (Gal. 6:14). When Jesus willingly sacrificed Himself on our behalf, He set the ultimate example of perseverance. Just as He endured the cross for our salvation, so we are to persist through hardship in order to receive His promised reward. He never overlooks our obedience, devotion, or endurance.

**Love and devotion to Jesus Christ:** If we truly love Jesus, our loyalty will not be reserved only for the good times, but we’ll remain faithful and obedient even when we experience intense pain and suffering. When Paul was in prison, he described his devotion most beautifully with these words: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Isn’t that what we truly want in life—to live fully for the Lord so others can see His life displayed in us?

### RESPONSE

- What is a recent hardship that you or a loved one has endured?
- Why does God allow us to experience challenging situations that feel almost unbearable as we go through them?
- How has the Lord given you an awareness of His presence that helped you undergo a particularly difficult situation?
- What have you learned about persevering in the Christian life that can be shared with others?