

Feel Like Giving Up

by Daniel Punnose

This sermon emphasizes the importance of enduring through difficulties by finding strength in faith, love, and hope in Jesus Christ. It highlights the need for believers to be examples in their works of faith, labor of love, and endurance in the face of persecution. The message encourages focusing on Jesus amidst life's storms to maintain faith and not be overwhelmed by challenges, reminding believers of God's power and promises.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 1:3, Matthew 14:29, Psalms 119:105, Amos 5:24, 1 Corinthians 11:1

Topics: "Endurance in Faith", "Strength in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Have you ever felt like giving up? Feel like you can't go on anymore, that life is just too much? You know, very often, even as believers, sometimes we feel like maybe life is just a little too difficult, the sickness is too much, this financial crisis, this relationship is just too strenuous, and in our last effort, we say, Lord, please help us. And in crying out to Lord, we find that our heart is filled with strength, and we find that we can press on. This is exactly how the Thessalonian believers felt and was encouraged by Paul, the apostle, writing this small letter to them, encouraging them, reminding them that they have works of faith, labor of love, and their enduring hope in Jesus Christ that gives them the strength to press on.

Before we jump into this study today, to continue going through this small letter of Thessalonians, let us pray and ask the Lord to help us to be doers of the word rather than just hearers, so that life can see all the promises of God coming true. Father, we thank you for your word that is so powerful. When we take it and apply it to our life, your promise is to make it real in our life that it bears fruit.

We pray that as we study and listen that you would help us to have hearts of obedience so that we would be doers of the word, not just hearers. And we thank you for this, in Jesus' name, amen. Paul the apostle, like I mentioned just a minute ago, encouraged them by reminding them that they have labors of faith.

They have works of faith, labors of love, and hope in Jesus Christ. Those are the three types of characteristics that all of us as believers and followers of Christ are to have. That our works of faith, the natural outcoming of our Christian life is that we bear fruit of good works.

People need to see our life every single day. A Christian's life is not a hidden life. A Christian's life is a life that at the workplace, we are a light to the dark world.

At school, that we are a light among our friends. In the neighborhood, in the village, in the city, among friends, at the shopping center, that our life is different and marked by God's love towards other people. My brother, my sister, you must ask the Lord to help you not to simply avoid doing bad things, which He will do.

He will help you to avoid those things, but that He would empower you to do the good things so that other people will see your life and praise God. In fact, it says that when Jesus performed the miracles, it says that people saw it and then they began to praise God. You know, that's the best type of character and testimony is when people see our life, but not only appreciate our life, but we direct their attention to God.

We say, Lord, please use my life to be a reflection of your grace and mercy. But you know, it's an amazing thing that Paul reminds them, it says their hope in Jesus helps them to endure even persecution. And we will see that in just a few minutes.

You know, the passion and the drive to survive, the survival instinct, scientists and doctors will tell you it's the most powerful instinct that we have inside of us. The drive that we should survive, we will do anything possible to survive. You know, a movie just recently came out called 127 Hours.

It's the true life story of a man named Aaron. He liked to go out into the mountains and climb rocks and he's a rock climber and he liked the, you know, the time of being alone and apart from everyone else and to be kind of in God's creation. While he was on the hilly, rocky side of the mountain and some of these very difficult areas, especially large rocks and boulders, he made a mistake and slipped and fell into a ravine where his arm got caught between a huge boulder and the wall of this ravine.

He was trapped there for 127 hours, hanging there by his arm, trying to push himself against the rock. That's five days, 127 hours he survived. And he tried to move this rock, this rock was huge, tons and tons of pounds it was holding and pinning his arm against the rock and he could not move.

In fact, he ran out of water, he ran out of food, he had to begin drinking his own urine to be able to survive. The drive to live, in fact, caused him as the last option, he did not know what to do because no one knew where he was, no one was there to rescue him. He took a pocket knife, a dull pocket knife that he had with him, you know, opened the pocket knife and he actually made a tourniquet, cut the blood off circulation off his arm and he cut his own arm off of the pocket knife, he cut the muscles and he broke the bone and then he freed himself and he got down to safety and went back to find help.

But can you imagine being pinned there for five days, drinking your own urine, not having hardly any strength to survive and you take your own knife and you cut off your arm so that you can live. The drive to survive will cause you to go to any extreme to live. When we face difficulties in this life, what gives you the drive to survive? As a believer, when you face persecution, as a believer, when your friends make fun of you at school, as a believer in the home, maybe you're the only believer and follower of Christ in your home, what gives you the drive to survive? Paul tells these Thessalonian believers who face great

persecution, even in danger to their very life, he says, their hope in Jesus gave them the drive to survive.

And he appreciates that. My brother, my sister, as a believer, we cannot trust in anything else except Jesus. Jesus is the only foundation for our life.

How do we fill our heart with faith and hope and trust so that we can trust God? The Bible tells us faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Psalm 119, verse 9 says, how can a young man, young woman keep their way straight? By living according to your word. Verse 11, I hide your word in my heart that I may not sin against you.

Verse 105, your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Paul encourages these believers and also us, when we don't know what to do, when we are unsure about this difficult life, we must keep our eyes on Jesus. You know, we have an interesting story in the Gospels, which record the life of Jesus and his apostles.

Peter, one of my favorite characters in the Bible, this man called by Jesus an experienced fisherman was very brave and sometimes not so smart when he said something. The apostles are on the lake of the Sea of Galilee and they're trying to obey what Jesus said, go across the lake to the other side, I will meet you there. Jesus goes on a mountainside to pray.

He's watching them trying to get across the lake and they're struggling against the wind and they're rowing and rowing and rowing and it says the whole night they suffered trying to get across that lake. Jesus, it says in the Bible, comes walking on the water. See, please keep in mind, Jesus is God, so he has power even over nature.

He can walk on the water. So Jesus walks on the water and the disciples, they see Jesus walking on the water. It's late night.

They're afraid. They think it's a ghost and they become afraid. They say, Oh, what is this? Who are you? What are you doing? I mean, I would become afraid if someone is walking on the water late at night, I would be terrified also.

And so Jesus says to them, he says, don't be afraid. It is I. Don't be scared. Peter says, Jesus, if that's you, let me come and walk on the water to you.

Jesus says, come to me, come walk on the water. Now, I don't know if Peter was thinking very clearly, asking Jesus to let him walk on the water. So Jesus says, come.

So Peter holds on to the boat. He slowly gets out of the boat and he steps onto the water and he's testing the water to see. And, you know, it's a miracle.

He's standing on the water. All the other disciples are watching. Look, there's Peter.

He's standing on the water and Peter begins to walk slowly on the water and he's walking towards Jesus. And Peter is probably thinking, see, you know, see me, I'm see how good I am. I'm walking the water.

All the other disciples are saying, look, look, Peter's walking, Peter's walking, he's walking on the water. And so Peter's walking in the water and Jesus is also there on the water. And all of a sudden, Peter begins to look around.

He looks to the left, he looks to the right and there's wind and waves. And all of a sudden, Jesus was lost in his vision because he had taken his focus off of Jesus and put his focus on the waves and the wind. And Peter began to sink in the water and he prayed, Oh Lord, save me.

And Jesus picked him up and pulled him out of the water, which he almost drowned in and brought him back to the boat. You know, as long as Peter kept his eyes, his eyes and his focus on Jesus, everything was okay. It was when Peter took his eyes off of Jesus and put it on the waves and the wind that he lost sight of the one who told him, come walk on the water and he began to sink.

You know, my brother, my sister, there are so many things that God speaks to us. Just like when God spoke to Peter, when Jesus spoke to Peter and said, come walk on the water, come to me. How many times God speaks to us through his word.

As long as we keep our eyes on what God says, we keep our eyes on Jesus, our faith in Jesus, then we can walk through the storm also. But if we take our focus off of Jesus, off the promises of God and fix it on our problems, on our difficulties, on our storms, we lose sight of what Jesus said. We lose sight of the promises of God and we begin to sink.

See, it's such an important thing because God's promises give our life so much hope. Even though we face many difficulties and many problems, we don't have to even be discouraged because the problem's because, you know why? Jesus said, peace I leave to you. My peace is not as the world gives.

You know what that means? That means the world offers many things, but maybe you're watching this program today and you know what I'm talking about. You've tried everything. You tried drugs, you tried alcohol, you tried friends, you tried women, you tried men, you tried entertainment, you tried money, you tried position, you tried power, you tried food, you tried everything this life offers.

In fact, we have the testimony of someone in the Bible. His name was King Solomon and he writes, I have tried everything and there's no satisfaction. There's only satisfaction in God.

You know why? Because God created our life with a purpose. That purpose is to know God, that he would know us and that we would make him known. Those are three things, very simple, that gives us a purpose and direction in life.

And Paul, reminding these believers at Thessalonica, appreciating them for their works of faith, their natural outcoming of the Christian life, their labor of love, that what they do is because they love Jesus. The Bible tells us, whatever you do, do it as unto the Lord. That's a good challenge for us.

And then he appreciates them for their hope and endurance and patience and Jesus. My brother, my sister, let that testimony also be in our life as well. In verse 4 of chapter 1 of 1 Thessalonians, Paul continues telling these believers, he says, for we know, brothers, loved by God, that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you, not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction.

You know, Paul tells them that they did not also just receive the gospel simply, but he says that God chose them. I want you to know something. This is God's promise.

God chooses you. God has chosen you, but you must choose God. You know, it's similar to if I were to give you a bus ticket and I give 20 people bus tickets.

And I say, I have chosen you to get on this special bus that will take you to the zoo. And you can see all the animals and all the different types of plants and fish and different things. I have given you 20 tickets to 20 different people, but see, you must choose to get onto the bus.

God chose you and he gave you a ticket, a free ticket for the forgiveness of sin and a bus that will take you to heaven. But you must choose to accept Jesus, what he did for you. God chose you, but you must choose what God has done for you.

If I give you a free gift, if I say this pen is for you, I've chosen to give it to you, but then you must choose to receive it also. Otherwise, it does no good. And Paul tells these believers that God has chosen them.

That's a wonderful promise because God loves you and he chooses you. And he tells them that the gospel did not simply come in empty words, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. You know, I have heard so many stories and met so many people that have experienced God's miraculous touch in their life.

In fact, there's, there's a man who came to one of my father's meetings and he came in total blindness. He got into the bus and people asked him, where are you going? He said, I'm going to see the speaker. And they said, how can you see the speaker? You're blind.

And he said, no, no, no, I'll see the speaker. And during that meeting, there was an opportunity that my father gave to the people to pray and ask the Lord to heal them, to touch them. The Bible says we can pray for the sick and God will heal them.

That's something that God has promised. And so this man also put his hand on his, on his, on his chest and said, Lord, if you can heal me, I believe you, please touch me, please heal me. You know what happened? This man received his sight.

He didn't tell us then, but he went back on the bus and the people in the bus who saw him when they came, were so surprised that this man could see, we know this man. He had a walking stick so he can find his way. And suddenly now he's able to see.

It was many, many months later that someone in the newspaper in his local area wrote a story about him. And we did not even know this, but told the whole story of how God had healed his blindness and gave him sight. Now for God to do a miracle is a simple thing, but what Paul is saying is that the gospel message, the news of Jesus Christ is not simply empty words, but God demonstrates his power to prove what his words say.

And that's true. God's promises are not empty words. They are for you.

They are for me. And if we take what he says, because we know the character of God is truth and uprightness and justice. If God speaks it, it must be true.

We can depend on it. And so Paul tells them that the gospel did not simply come in empty words, but it came in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells them that you know how we lived among you for your sake.

You became imitators of us and of the Lord. In spite of severe suffering, you welcome the message with the Holy Spirit given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

The Lord's message rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, your faith in God has become known everywhere. Paul tells them that they have seen his life and Silas life and Timothy's life, and they understood that their lives are an example. In fact, from Paul's life and Timothy's life and Silas life being example, they learned so much and they became a testimony for everyone else.

Let me ask you a question. Do people see your life as a model? Do they see your life as someone that they can follow? Maybe you're a teacher. Do you realize your students follow your life? Not necessarily your teaching.

Think about this. I can prove it to you. Think back to your favorite teachers in school, maybe first standard, second standard, fifth grade, sixth grade.

Think back to the teacher that you really, really love. Let me ask you this. Do you remember what they taught you? You don't remember what they taught you.

You may remember the subject name, science, sociology, history, chemistry, whatever it is. You remember what they taught you, but you remember their life. Maybe they showed you some extra love.

Maybe they showed you extra time, some counsel. They gave you more care and love to help you along in your studies. You love that teacher, not because of what they said, but who they were.

Remember, my dear parents, your children will not follow what you say, but they will follow who you are. My dear father, you may go to the factory. Your greatest influence for the younger people in that factory is not what you say, but who you are and your life.

Someone once said this, the average person will influence at least 10,000 people in their lifetime. Think about this. The average person, you and I, will at least influence 10,000 people in our lifetime.

Paul tells them that you have seen my life. My life became an influence for you. Your lives became an influence for everyone else.

See, it is not just your life. It is your life being an example to someone else and those people being an example to someone else and those people being an example to someone else. Here's the challenge.

If you and I do not raise our children in the ways of God, they will not know the ways of God, and they will raise their children in not knowing the ways of God, and it will get worse and worse and worse. But if I raise my children in the ways of God, they will raise their children in the ways of God, their children will raise their children in the ways of God, and you can have great influence in people's lives. Maybe you have Facebook.

Maybe you send emails. Maybe you use chat. Maybe you send text messages.

All those things are an influence on someone else's life. Use those things to be a positive influence in other people's lives. Rather than sending gossip messages by text, why don't you send Bible verses? Send nice sayings.

Send someone a message that says, I prayed for you. Become a positive influence in the society with the people that are around you. This is what Jesus said.

You are a light and a salt on a hill. You are a light on a hill and a salt to this world. You know, I remember many years ago climbing the mountains of Nepal, one of my favorite places to be.

Such beautiful mountains, such beautiful sceneries, wonderful people, very kind people, very generous people. But one thing I remember is climbing at night, trekking at night during the path, and I had a brother with me who was leading me, and I just had to follow him. But one of the things I remember while climbing up and down those mountains, even at night, is that we could look across the valley, and it was dark.

And we would see from miles and miles and miles away on the other mountainside, we could see flickers of light, candlelight in some people's homes. And I thought about this verse. Your life as a believer is a light on a hill.

You know, my brother, my sister, people are watching your life. People are watching my life. They want to know what a Christian is like.

My Christianity cannot be lived only on Sunday. My Christianity must be lived on Monday. I cannot be a Sunday Christian.

I must be a Monday Christian, a Tuesday Christian, a Wednesday Christian, a Thursday Christian, a Friday Christian, and a Saturday Christian. My Christianity cannot be reserved for Sunday worship. It must be lived along with other people so they can see my life.

Am I honest in my words? Am I honest with my money? Am I honest in not gossiping? Is my life different than people who do not know Jesus? That's what Paul is saying. Paul says to these Thessalonian believers, he says, I appreciate you because the testimony of your life and your character has gone all over parts of Asia. Is my life and testimony in my village a good testimony? Is my life and testimony in my family a good testimony? Is my life and testimony in my school a good testimony? May the Lord give us the strength and understanding that we would become a positive testimony in our society, that people will see our life matching our words.

Let our words be empowered by our life. Like Mahatma Gandhi said, we must become the change we wish to see. Let God use our life to change other people's lives by the example that we have.

Paul said this, and I will stop here. Follow me as I follow Christ. That is what we should say to other people.

You can look at my life, my family, my words, how I handle the money, how I treat other brothers and sisters, and follow my example. That's what God wants for us. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for your grace and mercy. We ask that you would make these things real in our life, that our life would become a testimony for all those people around us, that our life would be a bright light in a dark place. In Jesus' name, amen.

My brother, my sister, may the Lord bless you as you become an example to others with God's help in your life.

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