

# “I Quite”

During my junior and senior years of high school, I worked for my good friend Russ. Russ was three and a half years older than me. He was the young manager of a Sohio gas station just down the street from the high school. With only six weeks' experience, I was left by Russ to run the station all day one Saturday. Everything that could go wrong did go wrong. This was the day before self-service pumps, and I had two cars in the garage: one for an oil change and the other for a new set of tires. By the end of the day, I left Russ a simple note informing him of my intentions of discontinuing my employment.

He called me in to see him on Monday and asked what happened. After listening to me, he said he could not accept my resignation. When I asked why, he simply handed me back the note I left him. My name was signed on the bottom and it was addressed to Russ, but the simple message I left was, “I Quite.”

Ever found yourself uttering or muttering, "I give up" or "I quit"? Perhaps you have lamented: "What's the use?" or "Why should I?" Servants of the Lord who have wanted to toss in the towel and give up are quite common in the Scriptures. The great lawgiver and leader, Moses, wanted to give up. Once after the Israelites were mumbling, he told God, "If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now if I have found favor in Your sight and do not let me see my wretchedness!" (Numbers 11:15).

The great general, Joshua, handpicked by God to lead Israel into the Promised Land, prayed to God, "Alas, Lord God, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!" (Joshua 7:7). However, he did not give in or give up, but Joshua led God's people to conquer the Promise Land.

Elijah was one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. After he won the decisive contest with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, the people proclaimed that Jehovah alone is God and the false prophets were put to death. Queen Jezebel sought the life of Elijah, so he ran for safety "... a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!'" (1 Kings 19:4).

Although Job is a great example of patience, he too felt like giving up: "May the day perish on which I was born, and the night in which it was said, 'A male child is conceived.'" (Job 3:3).

Most of us know the story of Jonah. Sent to preach to the Ninevites, he ran and jumped on the ship for Tarshish. God sent a great sea creature to swallow him. After three days in its belly and much penitent praying, Jonah was vomited out on dry ground. His preaching to Ninevah resulted in the repentance of the Ninevites from the king on down. Jonah wanted God to destroy them and went up on a hill to see what would happen. When God sent a worm to kill the gourd that gave him shade from the blistering sun, Jonah wanted to die.

The Bible is perfect in that it shows us the faint-heartedness of some of its greatest men of God. Scripture would be imperfect if it did not demonstrate for us how to overcome those low times when we just want to quit.

At Philippi, Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten, and imprisoned. They sang and prayed (Acts 16:25). There was an earthquake. I do not think they were singing Elvis' "Jailhouse Rock," but they did shake things up a bit. The jailor and his household were even saved that night. Nothing was going right that day for these two missionaries, but they decided to make the most of the

situation. When we feel like we have been defeated, follow Paul and Silas' example and remember a proper response is more important than perfect circumstances.

Nebuchanezzar had a great idol built and commanded all his servants to bow to it or be cast into a fiery furnace. Daniel's three friends refused (Dan. 3). They were spared because God was with them. When Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace there were four men, not three. The lesson is clear: we must trust in God's presence. "Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Heb. 13:5). When Christ came to this earth from Heaven, He was called Emmanuel meaning "God with us." When He left this earth to ascend to Heaven, He promised, "Lo, I am with you always."

After the death of Christ, Peter turned back to the comfort of fishing. He took seven of the disciples with him. They fished all night and caught nothing. It sounds like he should quit fishing and go back to making disciples. Jesus thought the same. He told Peter, "Feed My sheep" (John 21:15-17). Peter's lesson was not to look back, but to stay on track (Luke 9:62).

No Christian I know has ever had it as tough as Job. Satan came and asked permission of God to tempt Job. "So the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.'" (Job 1:12). Later, God gave Satan even permission to attack Job's health, but not to take his life. Even today, God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to handle (1 Cor. 10:13). So when things in life are going down hill for you, remember it is God who has His hand on the brakes. He will only allow it to go so far. Nothing will happen to you that He is not aware of.

Nehemiah had received permission from the King of Persia to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, but he was met with resistance. The adversaries in this story are Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem the Arab. Jerusalem needed walls. A city in that time without walls was left in jeopardy. His enemies tried everything but could not stop Nehemiah from building. So, they tried to lure him to the valley of Ono. He said, "Oh, no!" to "Ono." The wall was finished in just 52 days, because the people had a mind to work! Will Rodgers must have been thinking of Nehemiah when he said, "You cannot defeat a man (woman) who will not stay down." "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Gal. 6:9).

Remember how Elijah wanted just to give up and die under the desert broom tree? God would not accept his premature resignation. Instead, He sent an angel to cook him breakfast twice and then gave the prophet three final tasks to perform. This prophet was not finished, and God was not finished with him. He did not need to give up but to freshen up. He had been very busy and needed to revive with a little rest. Christians can become exhausted from fighting the world and sin. Remember to rest. Even Jesus took time out to get away, so He could rest and pray.

Noah was 480 years old when God gave him the plans of the ark. The project was huge. The ark was about five stories high, 75 feet wide, and longer than a football field. No sooner did he get a pair of snails up the boat ramp and loaded onto the ark when it started to rain. It had never rained before and it has never rained like that since. After about 120 years of hard work, only eight people were saved. No, Noah was not a quitter. If he did, you and I would not be here today thinking about abandoning the ship. If you quit, how many others will suffer without your work and example?

Winston Churchill's speech at a West Point graduation, gave this advice, "NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER QUIT!" Paul put it a little differently to the Corinthian Christians: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

– Daniel R. Vess, The Forum, August 26, 2007