

rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation." (1 Peter 4:12-13)

How can we learn to hold on and live one day at a time? You can begin by forgetting all short cuts and magic cures. The Christian doesn't need a supposed demon of despair cast out, as if his going would make life easier. Nor will God come down and do our living for us. The tempter will not be destroyed until that day God casts him into prison. Satan will always be here, deceiving, accusing, and trying to rob every believer of his faith.

The longer I live for Christ, the more difficult it is for me to accept easy, cure-all solutions. But in my own struggles, I've found great comfort and help in two wonderful absolutes.

The first absolute is: **God really loves me.** God is not in the business of condemning His children—failures or not. He yearns over us as a loving father, wanting only to lift us out of our weaknesses.

I caught a glimpse of that love recently while walking in the woods around our ranch. Suddenly, there on the ground just ahead flopped a crippled little bird. I stooped to pick it up. It was then a familiar Scripture came flashing through my mind. *"Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father."* (Matt. 10:29)

God is with us, even when we fall. He does not abandon us on our way down. Our Lord never gives up on any of us!

Have you also fallen? Do you relate to that crippled sparrow, flopping helplessly in the dust? Are you wounded, hurting, and feeling lost and lonely? Do you ever think to yourself, "How can God put up with someone like me? How can He still love me when I've failed Him so badly?"

Often, we can recognize His great love only when we have hit bottom. Don't panic. Deliverance will come. God answers us by showing His love. And when we have learned how weak we are and have learned to trust His love and forgiveness—He will stoop down and gently help us back to the nest.

The second absolute is: **It is my faith that pleases Him the most!** *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him."* (Heb. 11:6) God wants so much to be trusted. That trust He counts as righteousness. (Rom. 4:3)

What do I do when temptation rolls over me like a flood? When my inadequacies overwhelm me and I see the reality of my weaknesses? Give up? Quit? Never!! I bring to God all I've got left—**my faith in Him!** I may not understand why He seems to take such a long time to intervene, but I know He will. He will keep His word to me.

I am convinced Satan wants to rob me of only one thing—my faith. He really doesn't want my morals or good deeds or my dreams. He wants to destroy my faith and make me believe God has forsaken this earth.

A fall is never fatal to those who keep their faith intact. In spite of despair and pressures that bog the mind and sap the strength, I believe God. I believe He will *"keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy."* (Jude 24)

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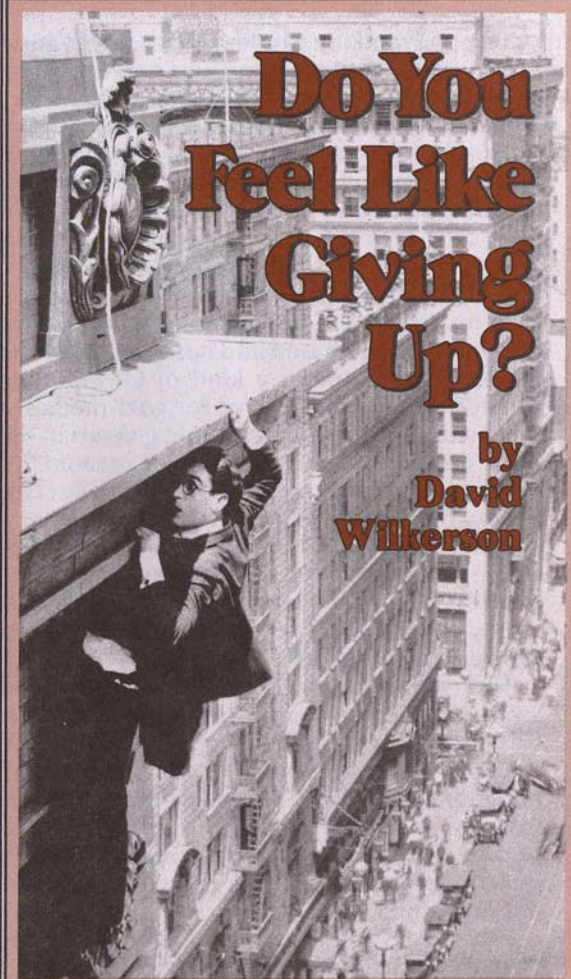
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A growing number of ministers have been writing to me in recent months, telling of their concern for those in their flock who are simply giving up. Today, more and more Christians are at the breaking point. None of the talk about giving up has to do with the Lord. Few Christians would even dare entertain thoughts of quitting on their love for Jesus. Most despairing Christians think only of giving up on themselves. You hear it so often now, "I can't go on anymore. I just can't make it. It's totally hopeless! Why try?"

I hear some ministers today who continually preach only a positive message. To hear them tell it, every Christian is receiving miracles—everybody is getting instant answers to prayer—everybody is feeling good,

living good, and the whole world is bright and rosy. I really wish all those good and healthy things for God's people, but that's not the way things are for a great number of very honest and sincere Christians. How sad to hear such shallow theology being pushed from pulpits today. It's an insult to a lowly Jesus who became poor, who died a failure in the eyes of the world. It is this kind of materialistic preaching that has so ill-prepared an entire generation of Christians to endure any kind of pain. They have not learned to be content with such things as they have—to be abased and not always abounding. Serving God becomes a kind of Olympic race in which everyone must strive for gold medals.

No wonder our young people give up in defeat. They can't live up to the image created by the religion of a happy-go-lucky, rich, successful, always positive-thinking Christian. Their world is not that idealistic. They look in a mirror reflecting a face covered with ugly pimples. They live with heartbreaks, hour-by-hour crises, and horrible family problems. They look into the uncertain future, frightened and worried.

Positive thinking won't make their problems go away. Confessing that these problems don't really exist doesn't change a thing. These "apostles of the positive" should not exclude the Gethsemane experiences of life. The cup of pain, the hour of isolation, and the night of confusion were all part of the Master's lifestyle. Our great achievements, our successes, ought to take place at Gethsemane, not Fort Knox!

The sawdust trail for many has become the gold dust trail. The Bible has become a catalog, with unlimited order blanks for life's goodies. Anything having to do with Job-like pain and suffering is considered negative. God is good and one should always think on good and honest reports—but pain, poverty, and suffering have befallen some of the saintliest of God's people—just like righteous Job.

MARRIAGE

What do you say to that wife whose home is breaking up and she seems powerless to stop it? She's been advised by her friends, counseled by her pastor, and has been exhorted over and over again to "stay on your knees and believe God for a miracle." So she fasts, and she prays. She bends over backwards, to the point of crawling on her knees to

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her husband. She exercises faith with every ability she possesses. But in spite of all her honest efforts, he grows hard and bitter, demanding a divorce.

Not all marriages are healed through prayer or good intentions. It takes two to make a marriage work, and even though prayer may bring down the power of Holy Ghost conviction upon a straying mate, that mate can resist all God's efforts and abort the solution.

Some may be wondering why I've spent so much time lately talking about marriage, divorce, and the home. The reason is simple enough. In my crusades, I talk to so many kids on the brink of suicide. An overwhelming majority tell me their depression stems from trouble at home. Their parents are having trouble, or they have already gotten a divorce.

Multitudes of husbands and wives are giving up on their marriages. A successful marriage counselor took me to lunch recently, and before the entree was served, he confessed his own marriage had been in jeopardy. "You just can't take any good marriage for granted anymore," he said. "I'm convinced Satan is determined to break up my marriage—and every good Christian marriage. It's a well-planned attack on the best of marriages. If Satan can get the strongest, most admired marriages broken up—then weaker ones will be tempted to quit struggling and give up."

The secret struggles in the Christian's personal life are just as critical. The inner battles of the average Christian today are staggering in intensity and proportion. Multitudes are involved in situations too hard to comprehend.

Paul said, "*For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened.*" (II Cor. 5:4) I doubt we could even count the great numbers of Christians who groan in secret because of the burdens they carry. Paul also talked about ". . . affliction which came to us . . . we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life." (II Cor. 1:8)

If you pulled back the facade from every great preacher and every admired personality, you would find moments of deep depression. You would find the same infirmities you find in any normal Christian. We all have seasons of despair accompanied by feelings of failure. At times, we have all thought of quitting. We have all had thoughts of giving up.

DOUBT

Why do we feel like giving up at times? Mostly because we act like God has forsaken the earth. We don't doubt His existence or His reality. But our prayers seem to go unanswered. We cry out for His help in such desperation, and He seems not to hear. We struggle along, making one mistake after another. We make promises to do better, we get into the Bible, we cry and pray, and stay busy helping others and doing good. But we are so often left with an empty, unfulfilled sensation. The promises of God haunt us. We hold onto those promises—in what we believe is honest, childlike faith—but time after time we fail to receive what we ask for. In the hour of temptation—down we go!

Doubt creeps in and Satan whispers, "Nothing works. Faith in God doesn't produce results. In spite of your tears, prayers, and trust in God's Word—nothing really changes. Days, weeks, and even years go by, and your prayers, hopes, and dreams are still unanswered and unfulfilled. Quit! Give up!"

Every Christian on this planet reaches that crisis point at one time or another in life. And in that moment, when the walls seem to be caving in and the roof appears to be collapsing, when everything seems to be coming apart, a voice deep within cries out, "Walk away from it all . . . Pack it in! Escape! Why put up with it? Run away . . . you don't have to take it. Do something drastic!"

David, overwhelmed by the evil in his heart, cried out to God, "*Awake, why do you sleep? Cast me not off . . . why do you hide? Why do you forget?*" (Psalm 44:23-24)

Christian—does it amaze you that great men of old faced the same battles you and I face today? The Bible says, "*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on*