

Never Say Never!?

A Devotion by Gerald Cumby

Yes...the topic of this devotion could end with an exclamation mark. However, it could be a question mark, too. Which is it? Well, actually it depends on what we are talking about. There are times when we want to emphasize a "never giving up" attitude. A noted quote on this revelation comes from Winston Churchill as he was encouraging the British citizens (United Kingdom) to stand strong during the height of World War II. The quote: "Never, never, never, never give up."

One of the most rewarding gifts God gave us and continues to give us, was/is the ability to choose for ourselves. Yet, God knew that this gift He gave us could be like a beautiful apple to the eye, delightfully grown to a red ripe fruit, beautiful in color and taste...or, a stagnant, distorted, shriveled up, putrefied, fly infested, inedible gift. It depends on the choosing of the gift and the willingness to protect that gift from contamination at all cost. Remember, God does not force the gifts on us. We must choose to invest our time, talents, and money to maximize the success of that gift or gifts.

Peter, the apostle, yielded to society's "scare tactics" in lieu of holding to the principles of the faith. Although Peter's wrong choice was evident then and through the centuries following, we read and see where it was not a permanent fault in this fisherman turned dynamic "on fire" preacher. Jesus knew that the gift given Peter was available through the power given (gift) from the Holy Spirit. Peter finally took that gift given and became an outstanding example of being able to say "never" and understanding that our "nevers" can become a powerful initiative for a growing and progressive faith.

Jesus loved using parables to instruct and teach his followers. Peter listened to Jesus when he was teaching. He had heard these truths God had proclaimed to his disciples and other followers. He knew that Jesus never, never made a mistake in his teaching, mentoring, and living the life he had chosen for himself by obeying God in every way. Peter not only heard the teaching, but he was part of the teaching. When Jesus said something, he meant it. Denying Jesus was not on Peter's agenda. He meant it when he said he would never deny, betray or give up on his

Lord and Savior; but...he did. Just as Jesus predicted, Peter failed to live up to his statement... "I will never disown my Lord."

Matthew 26:33, Peter replied, *"Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."*

Matthew 26:35, But Peter declared, *"Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."* And all the other disciples said the same.

Mark 14:31, But Peter insisted emphatically, *"Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."* And all the others said the same."

Note: When God desires to emphasize something to the maximum, He will have it in Scripture two or three times. Isn't He an awesome God?

John 13:36-38, "Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later." ³⁷ Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." ³⁸ Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times! "

Till you have denied (disowned) Me three times:

- Peter confidently said that he would follow Jesus and even die for him. Yet when the test came, he could not stand the test (a servant-girl's tongue was sharper than an executioner's sword).
- Before the next morning dawned, he would deny he even knew Jesus three times.

I believe:

- Peter would have died for Jesus right then...but he later failed because his devotion was based on emotion, and in the soon-to-come crisis emotion would fail him.

- Peter's denial of Jesus was a spontaneous choice (emotion). Peter's denial was terrible, but it wasn't the same as what Judas did (planned and calculated denial).
- Peter was a different man when the Holy Spirit was released as a catalyst for a spirit-filled life. We see a different Peter when his walk is no longer built on emotion, but on the work of Jesus on the cross and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Peter stated that he would NEVER deny knowing Jesus.

We know Peter did not fulfill his pledge to Jesus...but, in the end he was a dynamic witness for the cause of Christ. He gave his life; just as Jesus had prophesied. History states Peter died a horrible death (crucified upside down). The "NEVERS" were forgotten and forgiven. Peter was faithful to his calling to the end.

We should NEVER give up on our pledge to fulfill our purpose in life to grow in God's grace...desiring to be more like Jesus.

Please go to next page. We have the Christian message going out throughout the secular world. People are dying for their faith. Martyrs from every walk of life continue to stand strong to the end.

The Jesus message is a timeless truth.

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus

Words attributed to S. Sundar Singh

1. I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
No turning back, no turning back.
2. The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
No turning back, no turning back.
3. Though none go with me, still I will follow;
Though none go with me, still I will follow;

- Though none go with me, still I will follow;
No turning back, no turning back.
4. My cross I'll carry, till I see Jesus;
My cross I'll carry, till I see Jesus;
My cross I'll carry, till I see Jesus;
No turning back, no turning back.
5. Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
No turning back, no turning back.

"I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" is a Christian hymn that originated in Assam, present-day Meghalaya, India.

According to P. Job, the lyrics are based on the last words of Nok seng, a Garo man, a tribe from Meghalaya which then was in Assam, who converted to Christianity in the middle of the 19th century through the efforts of an American Baptist missionary. He is said to have recited verses from the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of John as he and his family were killed. The formation of the martyr's words into a hymn has been attributed to the Indian missionary Sadhu Sundar Singh.[1]

1. "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus", Timeless Truths Free Online Library. Retrieved 2011-10-09.
2. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, I have Decided to Follow Jesus.

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