Glad Tidings

"And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers…" (Acts 13:32)

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Never say "never" ?

(Jerry Fite)

We hear people say, *"I would never do that."* We then default to *"Never say never."* Why? Because you do not know what you will do in a given situation. You might think you will never do something, but until you are in the same situation you do not know how you will react. So, never say "never" may be a wise circumspective view of self, wrapped up in genuine humility.

Peter is an example of one saying he would never do something. It was a critical time in Jesus' life, for He was to be arrested "this night" as He heads to His death on the cross. It was a decisive moment for Peter to manifest his devotion to Jesus. Peter responded to Jesus' prophetic words, *"all ye shall be offended in Me this night..."* with *"If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended" (Matthew 26:31, 33).*

Peter may have been impulsive to a fault, but you never doubt his allegiance to the Lord when he begins walking on the water toward Jesus in a storm, or when he draws his sword to defend Jesus from His surrounding captors *(Matthew 14:28-29 John 18:10).* But distressed waves exposed a weak faith, and fear overcame resolve when Peter fulfilled written prophecy that all would be offended in Jesus when Jesus was captured. This included Peter who denied Jesus three times, just as Jesus prophesied, despite Peter's ultimate resolve to die before denying his Lord *(Matthew 26:34-35, 69-74).*

In Jesus' interactions with Peter, our Lord does not teach Peter explicitly, nor us, to "never say never." Paul did not shy away from expressing a definite resolve regarding future actions. In the context of eating meat, Paul writes, *"Wherefore, If meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble" (I Corinthians 8:13).* What difference is there between, I will not do something for "evermore" and I will "never" do something?

The inspired writer of Psalms 119 wrote, *"I will never forget thy precepts. For with them Thou hast quickened me" (Psalms 119:93).* Apparently it is not a sin to talk to God about things you will never do. Who would convict Paul of sin for saying he would not eat meat forever? It is not inherently sinful to say what you would never do, for God so spoke. What a blessing to hear God say, *"I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).*

The take-away from observing Peter's failure could be that we mere humans should "never say never." In doing so, we are cutting out determined resolve from our walk with God. Peter was emphasizing his determination to never fall away from, nor be offended in his Lord, regardless what others would do. Paul was expressing his resolve to take meat off of his dietary table forever if it causes a brother to offend his conscience. The Psalmist is expressing his determination to never forget God's word because it is God's word that gives him life. Must we shrink back from saying I will never do something because something greater is moving us to make a "forever" resolve?

We have a song in our Hymnal entitled *"I'll Never Forsake My Lord."* What moves us to sing such resolve? ...Because *"He has never forsaken me."* Peter's failure to live up to his professed commitment should not cause us to "never say never." Instead, when tempted, we should remember what noble reason moved us to be so resolved, and live up to it!