

BASKET RIDERS AND ROPE HOLDERS

Saul of Tarsus held a good conscience. He was a Pharisee. He was strongly convicted. So much so that it took the Lord on the Damascus Road to strike him blind so that he could be given an opportunity to get his thinking straight. The Lord sent Ananias to him that he might receive his eye sight back and "*be filled with the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 9:17). After Saul had regained vision he was baptized. Then Saul began to preach that Jesus is the Son of God in the Jewish Synagogues. This is a radical change for a man that had actually held the coats of those who stoned Stephen for preaching Christ crucified. Let us now read the inspired Luke's account of what took place next in Acts 9:21-25.

But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

After Saul became known as Paul, he gained the confidence of those who knew his former zeal as a Pharisee. He became a high profile member of the Lord's church. He lovingly taught the plain and blunt truth of Jesus Christ. Before he was converted to Christianity he thought it blasphemy to teach that Jesus was the son of God. After he became a Christian, he had a 180 degree turn around in his teaching. Paul was not afraid to teach the truth. He didn't have an agenda. He was not trying to promote "Paul". He promoted "Jesus". In promoting Jesus his life was in danger as we note that he had to be let "*down by the wall in a basket*". He was a "basket rider".

We need basket riders who are willing to put their lives and reputations at risk for the cause of Christ, not for glory and fame. Preachers and missionaries should "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4:2). As a well known preacher, Marshall Keeble, put it long ago, preach when

"they wants to hear it and when they don't wants to hear it". We should always have our words seasoned with salt. And we should not preach with the intent of offending anyone. However, from experience, we know that at some point we are going to anger someone with the things we say. Thus, if we are teaching for the right reason we should not worry if someone might be offended at our words.

Comparatively speaking, there are not very many basket riders in the modern church. There are not a lot of high profile members who are willing to put their lives and reputations on the line. Not every member can be a basket rider. But, those who ride in baskets need "rope holders". Let us now turn our thoughts to rope holders.

What is a rope holder? Rope holders are the unsung heroes in the Lord's church. They are not necessarily well known or do anything glamorous in the eyes of their peers. They do mundane or ordinary tasks. Yet, what they do is very important in keeping the church going. We don't know the names of the people that let Paul down a wall in a basket. Yet, they saved his life. Paul's teaching was very crucial to the development and propagation of the early church. He needed rope holders to help and protect him. Low profile tasks performed by modern rope holders on church grounds include cleaning the church building, doing maintenance on church property, handing out song books, getting to the church building early to unlock the doors, remaining late to lock the building, and setting the communion table. Other tasks include visiting/helping the sick and needy, helping someone fix something, helping move a heavy piece of furniture, taking produce from summer gardens to the poor or elderly, or maybe just giving someone our attention and letting them talk about their problems.

A major characteristic of a rope holder is that of being a servant. Let us consider the servitude of Jesus Christ:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: (Php. 2:5-7)

Jesus came to this earth and was born of a woman. He became lower than the angels. One small example of his serving his disciples is recorded in the Gospel of John:

He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. (John 13:4-5)

One must admit that washing dirty feet is not a task that most would desire to perform. However, since Jesus did something that lowly, we are not above doing similar tasks for our neighbors.

Many times we want to do something great like Naaman aspired to do in 2 Kings 5. Yet, he was cured of his leprosy when he did what God told him to do. It was a lowly maid servant that told Naaman's wife about God's prophet which ultimately led to Naaman's cure. This little maid was truly a rope holder.

Lastly, let us consider the widow who gave two mites. She was in need and gave all she had. She was a very humble rope holder. Jesus had this to say about her deed:

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living. (Mark 12:41-44)

In conclusion we note that the Apostle Paul was worthy of being a basket rider. He preached "Christ crucified" in spite of what the crowds wanted to hear. He had once held the coats of those who stoned Stephen for preaching the same thing. After the Damascus Road incident He never once regretted converting to Christianity. Jesus was God the Son. He came to earth and became a servant. Let's consider Paul's inspired words:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being

found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Php. 2:6-8)

Jesus acted as a lowly servant like the maid that gave the message to Naaman's wife and the widow who gave two mites. We are no better than our Master. Thus, we should be a rope holder and serve one another in humility. I truly believe that before anyone can become a basket rider that they must first become a servant, a rope holder. Christians should be humble and "*esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*" (Php. 2:3, 4). In so doing the common sins of jealousy and pride will be practiced less and less, and the Lord's church will grow as a result.

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APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Why is polygamy wrong? It was practiced by many in the Old Testament such as Jacob, David and Solomon.

ANSWER: Jesus came to fulfill the old law (Matt. 5:17), which had the effect of changing many regulations which it contained. A few of the many changes had to do with what could be eaten, observance of the Sabbath, animal sacrifices, burning of incense, and such like. Polygamy was never the intent of God, although He did permit such before the New Covenant came through Christ. Against His will, God also permitted Israel to have a king (1 Sam. 8:19-22). Against His will, God permitted divorce and remarriage (Deu. 24:1-4). Paul commented about God's granting things against His will when he addressed those on Mars Hill, "*The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent*" (Acts 17:30).

From the garden of Eden it was evident that God's intent was for a man to have his wife and a woman to have her husband, "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*" (Gen. 2:24). This did not permit one man to be one flesh with several wives! Paul emphasized this in 1 Corinthians 7:2, "*Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*"

Solomon was in error in having many wives. It is recorded, "*It came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God*" (1 Kin. 11:4).

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
September 1 – 4	Mt. Zion Crab Orchard, KY	Aaron Keeton
September 9 – 11	Valley Valley, AL	Kevin Mills (Newnan, GA)
September 16 – 18	Pleasant Ridge Woodbury, TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
September 23 – 25	Mt. Carmel Road Gay, GA	Tim Eldridge (Algood, TN)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

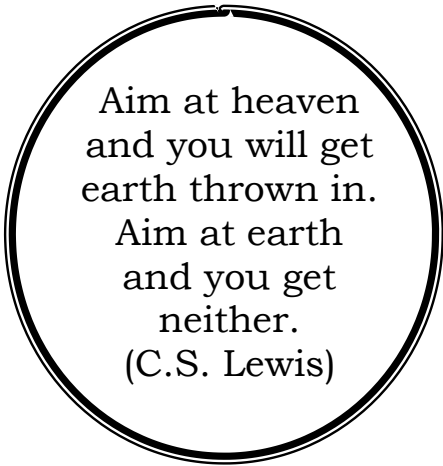
1. Where did Aaron die?
2. After they had mourned Saul and Jonathan's deaths, David and his household went up to Hebron, where he was anointed king of Judah. Who was installed as king of Israel?
3. Solomon writes in Proverbs that there is more hope for a fool than for whom?
4. According to John's gospel, the parents of the blind man whom Jesus healed feared the Jews who questioned them about their son because they knew anyone who confessed that Jesus was Christ would be punished in what way?

5. Paul said that he and his companions wanted to visit the Thessalonians, but didn't. Why?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. When God called Moses from the burning bush, he told Moses what people would listen to him? THE ELDERS AND PHARAOH (Exo. 3:18)
2. What was the name of Samson's first wife? THE BIBLE DOES NOT SAY (Judg. 14:1-20)
3. Jeremiah prophesied that the Israelite captivity under Babylon would last how long? SEVENTY YEARS (Jer. 25:11)
4. When Jesus sent out His twelve disciples, he challenged them to be as wise as what creature, yet as harmless as what other creature? WISE AS SERPENTS, HARMLESS AS DOVES (Matt. 10:16)
5. In II Corinthians, Paul mentioned a helper of his, calling him his "partner and fellow worker concerning you," reminding the Corinthians that they had refreshed this man's spirit. What was this man's name? TITUS (2 Cor. 7:13, 8:23)



Aim at heaven
and you will get
earth thrown in.
Aim at earth
and you get
neither.
(C.S. Lewis)