

“Will Someone Hold the Rope?”
Acts 9:23-31, II Corinthians 11:32-33

Introduction: As we come to chapter nine of Acts, we find Saul, the great persecutor of the church, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. This takes place near a city known as Damascus. Notice some very important events that occur in this city:

1. The Slaughter at Damascus vs. 1-2
2. The Salvation at Damascus vs. 3-9
3. The Surrender at Damascus vs. 10-19 (v. 15, vs. 17-18)
4. The Servant at Damascus vs. 20-22
5. The Searching at Damascus vs. 23-25

It was here in the city of Damascus that a very interesting thing happened (v. 25). The disciples took Saul at night and let him down by a basket over the wall because the Jews were watching for him at the gates. As we look at the Word of God some interesting things were placed in a basket. Notice:

1. God’s Money was in a Basket Deuteronomy 26:2
 - a. God’s Money was a Priority v. 2- “...*first of all the fruit of the earth...*”
 - b. God’s Money was Protected v. 2- “...*put it in a basket...*”
 - c. God’s Money was in a Place vs. 2, 10-11
2. God’s Meal was in a Basket
 - a. Jesus Fed 5,000 with Five Loaves and Two Fishes Matthew 14:20- “...*twelve baskets full.*”
 - b. Jesus Fed 4,000 with Seven Loaves and a Few Little Fishes Matthew 15:37- “...*seven baskets full.*”
3. God’s Man was in a Basket Acts 9:25, II Corinthians 11:32-33

Body: Although this is a short passage, it reveals a tremendous connection between the disciples and the man of God. There was connection between the man of God in the basket and the disciples on the wall and it was a rope. This rope reveals a connection that ought to take place in our days between the people and the preacher. Notice:

- I. The Decision about the Rope
 - A. At some point in the disciples lives they made a commitment to grab that rope and not let go. When have you made that decision in your life?
 - B. Luke 14:26- “*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*”

- C. Luke 14:27- *“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”*
- D. Luke 14:33- *“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”*
 - 1. If all the sleeping folk would wake up,
 - 2. And all the lukewarm folk would fire up,
 - 3. And all the dishonest folk would confess up,
 - 4. And all the disgruntled folk would sweeten up,
 - 5. And all the discouraged folk would cheer up,
 - 6. And all the depressed folk would look up,
 - 7. And all the estranged folk would make up,
 - 8. And all the gossipers would shut up,
 - 9. And all the dry bones would shake up,
 - 10. And all the true soldiers would stand up,
 - 11. And all the tightwads would pay up,
 - 12. And all the church members would pray up
 - 13. Then your church would have a revival!

II. The Dedication to the Rope

- A. Keep in mind that there is someone on the other end. If we let go there could be disaster. They dedicated themselves until the job was complete.
- B. They had no idea that Saul would turn into the Apostle Paul.
- C. Luke 9:23- *“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me”*
- D. How to discourage your preacher:
 - 1. “Don’t attend the Sunday evening service or prayer meeting
 - 2. Go to church when ‘convenient’
 - 3. Habitually come late, and always sit just inside the door
 - 4. Don’t give him your attention, but always whisper
 - 5. Act cold to show your dignity
 - 6. Never appreciate his efforts
 - 7. Tell him what wonderful messages you have heard elsewhere
 - 8. Always have ‘roast preacher’ for Sunday dinner, criticizing him before your children
 - 9. Don’t make him welcome in your home; leave the T.V. full blast, even when he prays (or tries to)
 - 10. Accuse his wife of running things
 - 11. Don’t pray for him, and never offer to help
 - 12. Always do the opposite of what he suggests
 - 13. Get your ‘gang’ together to oppose him in business meetings
 - 14. Don’t take your Sunday guests to hear him”
- E. “Have you ever tried to preach one hundred and four sermons a year to the same congregation? Have you ever tried to please all the members of your church? Have you ever tried to lead a prayer meeting week after week when one hundred and

twenty five of the one hundred and fifty members were absent? Have you ever tried to visit all the newcomers in your community; all the sick at home and in the hospital of your congregation; the lost in your neighborhoods, in about sixty-five homes of the members; and attend all the committee and extra church meetings—all in twelve months. (Pity the pastor who has a much larger church!) Have you ever had to lead when no one would follow? Have you ever tried to get a little man to do a big job, or a big man to do a small job? Have you ever tried to carry the weight of a lost world, plus the weight of your own church and community? Have you ever tried to love when others hate, or praise when others condemn? Have you ever tried to bind up broken hearts or re-establish broken homes? Have you ever tried to sympathize with and help fallen men and women when others seem not to care and even mock? Have you ever tried to smile upon empty collection plates and realize that the world is moving away from God? Have you ever tried to pour out your very own soul to get men to give themselves to Christ and have no response? If not, then you cannot know what it means to be the pastor of a church.

F. Instead of criticizing the preacher and the church, get involved!

1. “If he is young, he lacks experience; if his hair is gray, he is too old
2. If he has five or six children, he has too many; if he has none, he is setting a bad example
3. If his wife sings in the choir, she is being forward; if she doesn’t, she isn’t interested in her husband’s work
4. If he speaks from notes, he has canned sermons and is dry; if he is extemporaneous, he is not deep
5. If he spends too much time in the study, he neglects his people; if he visits, he is a gadabout
6. If he is attentive to the poor, he is playing to the grandstand; if to the wealthy, he is trying to be an aristocrat
7. If he suggests improvements for the Church, he is a dictator; if he makes no suggestions, he is a figurehead
8. If he uses too many illustrations, he neglects his Bible; if not enough, he is not clear
9. If he condemns wrong, he is cranky; if he does not, he is a compromiser
10. If he preaches an hour, he is windy; if less, he is lazy
11. If he preaches the Truth, he is offensive; if not, he is a hypocrite
12. If he fails to please everybody, he is hurting the Church; if he does please everybody, he has no convictions
13. If he preaches tithing, he is a money-grabber; if he does not, he is failing to develop his people
14. If he receives a large salary, he is mercenary; if a small salary, it proves he is not worth much
15. If he preaches all the time, the people get tired of hearing one man; if he invites guest preachers, he is shirking responsibility”

G. We ought to:

1. Pray For Him I Thessalonians 5:25- “*Brethren, pray for us.*”

- a. II Thessalonians 3:1- *“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you”*
- b. Hebrews 13:18- *“Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.”*
2. Paid Attention To Him II Thessalonians 3:7- *“For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you”*
 - a. II Thessalonians 3:9- *“Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us”*
 - b. Hebrews 13:7- *“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”*
 - c. Hebrews 13:17- *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”*
3. Pay Him I Corinthians 9:14- *“Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”*
 - a. I Corinthians 9:7-14
 - b. I Timothy 5:17-18
 - c. Matthew 10:6-10
 - d. Luke 10:7- *“And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.”*
 - e. Galatians 6:6- *“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.”*
 - f. I Thessalonians 5:12-13
 - g. Philippians 4:10-19
 1. I Kings 17:8-16

III. The Demonstration of the Rope II Corinthians 11:32-33

- A. We must keep in mind that the king kept the city of Damascus with a garrison desirous to apprehend Saul. For them to place their hands on that rope was an act of defiance to the king.
- B. Have you ever got behind the preacher even though it went against the grain?
- C. II Timothy 1:16- *“The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain”*

Conclusion: On October 2, 1792 a meeting was held in Kettering, England in which the Baptist Missionary Society was formed. This took place in the church that Andrew Fuller was pastoring. Fuller was appointed the secretary of the society and he remained faithful until he reached the realms of glory. Speaking of the mission to India he stated,

“Our undertaking at its commencement really appeared to me to be somewhat like a few men who were deliberating about the importance of penetrating a deep mine which had never been explored. We had no one to guide us, and while we were thus deliberating, Carey, as it were, said, ‘Well, I will go down if you will hold the rope.’ But before he went down he, as it seemed to me, took an

oath from each of us at the mouth of the pit to this effect, 'that while we lived we should never let go the rope'."

"Andrew Fuller held fast the rope till his hand fell powerless in death." (William Cathcart)