

"Holding the Rope"

Bailey Chapel
11/10/57
A.M.

Scripture Lesson:-

Text:- Acts 9: 25. "Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down the wall in a basket".

Introduction:- Soon after Pentecost, there arose a great persecution of the church. Among those who championed the cause of the enemies of Christ was a young man by the name of Saul of Tarsus. Stephen had already died a martyr, and those who had stoned him had left their cloaks at the feet of Saul. Saul grew so bitter and filled with hatred that he began to persecute and pursue the Christians into strange cities. However, while on his way to Damascus, the Lord struck him down. A light from heaven shone round about him, and he heard the voice of Jesus. He was stricken blind and remained that way for three days, until Ananias laid his hands upon him and prayed for him. After that prayer he received his sight. He was also saved and blest of God, filled with his Spirit, and called to preach the gospel. Soon this young man Saul was entering into Jewish synagogues of Damascus and preaching the gospel of the Christ whom he had been persecuting.

The anointing of God came upon Saul in a very powerful way, so that he proved that Jesus in the Son of God, and confounded the religious leaders who were opposed to the followers of Jesus. Those leaders turned against him and sought to kill him. So it soon came to pass that he who had been the hunter became the hunted. The persecutor became the persecuted. The Bible says, "They watched the gates day and night to kill him". So Saul was bottled up in Damascus for a period of time. But the disciples of Jesus had other ideas. They took a rope and a basket and proceeded to let Paul, as he was then called, down outside of the walls. They quietly and surely let him down in a basket. But those disciples did not know it, but they were actually saving the life of a man who was soon to become the great Apostle Paul.

I.

Now let us talk about the men who held the rope. First, we do not know the names of those men. We know of the man who was in the basket., for the Bible tells us that he was Saul, who became Paul. But the Bible does not identify the men who held the rope. There are two classes of Christians in the world. There is a class that will do anything in the service of God as long as other people know about it, as long as they are praised and bragged on to receive the attention of others. Then there is a class who will do anything in the service of God whether or not anybody else ever knows about it. This last class are those who are holding the rope

God has many people whom he is hiding away who are holding the rope for some else right now. God may ~~want~~ want to put a rope into your hand. You may never receive any praise or honor of men, but there is a God whose eyes sees you as you hold that rope. If you are a consecrated and devout Christian, that will be a sufficient reward.

II.

The second thing about these men, they held the rope by night. It was a dangerous thing to do. The life of Saul was in jeporidy, but these men felt that he was a child of God and his life must be saved. So they came by night, when the city was being combed by the officers of the law. Religious leaders were, in their hatred, trying to find Saul and destroy him. But these good men went out at night and risked their lives to save him. They counted not their lives as dear as they brought the rope and the basket and hid the man until they could take him to the top of the wall and let him down to safety, on the other side.

The best time to hold the rope is when things are dangerous, when it is unpopular, when things are going hard. God needs men and women who will hold the rope even at the risk of their lives. The people who become great in God's eyes and who stir

the imagination of the world are those who are willing to risk everything for the people they love and for the Christ they serve. Inasmuch as you do it unto the least of these, God's people, you do it unto Jesus Christ. The people who helped Saul did not know he would become great. All they knew was that they felt a burning desire to save a man's life, to spare a man whom they considered to be a babe in Christ. So they went out at night in the full knowledge that they were risking their very lives. I wonder where we would go if suddenly the tide turned against us, even more than it is now. If it became a matter of life or death; yea, if the long arm of the enemy reached inside of this church with guns and with promises of imprisonment. I wonder how many of us could and would brave that kind of persecution. How many of us would come to church. How many would take the kind of persecution Jesus received when the soldiers arrested him:

III.

Third, these men held the rope until Paul was safe. They did not turn the rope loose. Some people say, "I've been holding the rope but I do not see how I can hold on to it much longer."

There are two reasons why you should not turn the rope loose. First is, the basket on the other end may soon touch the ground. The second reason is, God may not have anyone but you to hold that rope. You may be the only one who is doing the work of God. You may be the only one who is concerned about some child of God, some minister, some sick person, some lost soul. You may be the only one who today is praying for the church.

IV.

I come now to the fourth point, which I believe is the greatest of all. They did not know how great a man they had on the end of the rope. They did not know that the flame of his Spirit would someday break out into a mighty flame and scorch the Roman Empire. They did not know that the voice

which they had heard begin to preach the gospel would some day cry "Stand upon thy feet" and that cripples would leap and walk. They did not know that this man would travel more miles, preach more sermons, establish more churches, win more souls, heal more sick people, write more books of the Bible, than any man who had ever lived. They did not know how great a man they had on the end of their rope. They were just holding on to what God had entrusted to their hands. So hold on to that rope.

Conclusion:- The colored janitor and the Bishop.

One Sunday morning, a young preacher, walked across the hills of Tennessee to a little country church. He was to preach his first sermon. But somehow he got lost in his sermon that morning and made a big failure. When the service was over every one was disappointed and they filed out of the church. Nobody came up to him and spoke to him. He sat down upon the pulpit, buried his face in his hands and wept. Soon he felt a tap on his shoulder, and a voice saying, "Now, Son, I want you to go home with me for dinner. My wife has a good dinner cooked. After we eat, we will sit down and talk to the Lord."

The young preacher said, "No, if God will forgive me, I'll never try to preach another sermon as long as I live, I'm through."

Ole Mose, the colored janitor said, "Son, you can't feel like that. Come now; you will feel better when you have eaten. So Mose took the young preacher home for dinner. It was a good dinner. After dinner was over, Mose said, "Come, let us go down by the branch creek that flows near by. "Son, get down, I want to pray for you." The boy got down, the old colored man was down on his knees. He reached over his hand and laid it upon the boy's head and prayed this prayer. "O God, make him a great preacher and send him the world."

Years passed. The church became larger. It was rebuilt. The bishop dedicated it. Went home with Mose for dinner.