



BE A ROPE HOLDER

"I thank my God...For your fellowship [partnership] in the gospel from the first day until now." Philipians 1:3a,5).

William Carey, the great missionary to India, said to a body of people, "I will go down if you will hold the ropes." It's a great thought. It's a great mental picture. "I will go into the places where you will never go, but you must hold the ropes. I'll go down if you'll hold on. I'll go as long as you're here holding fast, holding tight."

Missionary work is a partnership. We cannot fulfil the Great Commission without them going, and they cannot go unless we send them. Paul wrote, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And who shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Romans 10:14-15a).

God called Paul and Barnabas to missionary work as they served in the church at Antioch (see Acts 13:1-2). What was the response of the church? "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." (Acts 13:3). Fasting. Praying. Sending. Going. That's what it takes!

A famous artist was once asked to paint a picture of a dying church. It was expected that he would paint a small and humble congregation in an old, rundown, dilapidated building. Instead, he painted a stately edifice with a rich pulpit and magnificent windows — and near the door, an offering box, marked "Missions" with the contribution slot blocked by cobwebs.

When a church loses its burden for missions, it can pretend to be alive, but it's really dead! It has ceased to be a New Testament church. Remember, the mission of the church is missions!

Will you be a rope holder for those who are going? Rehab and her friends held the rope for the spies to escape. The friends of the paralytic held the rope through the roof to get him to Jesus. The newly converted Paul escaped in a basket while the Believers held the rope. Paul needed the assistance of rope holders.

Acts 9:23-25 is a passage where a rope played a significant role, "Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket." Obviously, a rope is not explicitly mentioned in this passage. However, the disciples used a rope to lower Paul down the wall.

Paul, the greatest leader of the New Testament church, had recently come to faith in Christ. In Damascus, he was filled with passion and zeal, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, there were Jews plotting to kill him. They were opposed to his message. That conflict escalated to the point that Paul was forced to escape for his life. A group of fellow disciples lowered him to the ground in a basket. They held the rope. What a service! We read this passage and quickly pass over this significant act of service. We might notice Paul's being lowered over the wall. But the act of holding the rope is quickly overlooked.

Notice three encouraging applications.

1. Hold the rope: there is an important person at the other end.

These disciples had no idea who they held in their basket. They knew he was a preacher. They knew he had recently been converted to faith in Christ. There was no way, in their wildest dreams, they could imagine the impact this man would have on the world and the Christian faith. As the first missionary of the New Testament church, he would shake the Roman Empire with his preaching. He would write one third of the New Testament. You never know who you will have in your basket. That idea is incentive to be faithful in the work God has called you to and to influence others.

Paul was a great man of God, but he needed the assistance of others. Let me use this to remind you that we have a responsibility to those around us. Some people get so preoccupied with their own needs that they cannot see the needs of others. God has created us with a desire and a capacity to be servants. Service is not a draining enterprise. It is a life-giving activity. Serving others should be a privilege.

2. Hold the rope: apparently, menial tasks have eternal value.

What a menial task — lowering a man through a window in a basket at the end of a rope. The word menial refers to “work that requires little skill or training, is not interesting, and confers low social status on somebody doing it.” Our churches have jobs that may seem menial. This is not God’s opinion. The Lord Jesus honours efforts that may seem menial and insignificant. In our Fellowships a small word of encouragement or appreciation from one another can go a long way.

3. Hold the rope: there is a cost!

Paul is being lowered because the Jewish leaders were plotting to kill him. In helping Paul, the disciples could face persecution or death. We need to understand that holding the rope sometimes carries a cost. Serving Jesus Christ is a joyful thing, but it carries a cost. There is a cost for nearly everything in life. Following Jesus Christ and serving Him has a cost. Martin Luther said, “A religion that does nothing, that saves nothing, that gives nothing, that costs nothing, that suffers nothing, is worth nothing.”

Today missions’ movements are still enabled by rope-holders—committed believers who pray, send money, and staff organisations that equip and send missionaries to foreign lands as well as those working in our own.

HOW TO BE A ROPE HOLDER

- We Can Be Intercessors

“..as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you “ 1 Samuel 12:23

One of the greatest blessings to me is when someone tells me they are praying for me. Every Christian Worker would feel the same way. Hold the rope with your prayers. Let them know you are praying for them.

- We Can Be Encouragers

Barnabas was a great encourager. Again, let your missionaries know you are behind them. One of the greatest needs in our fellowships today is encouragement. Whenever you can give a word of encouragement to someone do so.

- We Can Be Helpers

Establish a missions’ team in your local church. Maybe you can visit missionaries on the field for a short time to help out. Keep the work of Christian workers before your fellowship. Write to them asking how you can help.

- We Can Be Supporters

Most people remember William Carey as one of the fathers of the modern missionary movement. But few remember Andrew Fuller as the man who organised, raised funds, and built a lasting enterprise to ensure the success of gospel endeavours.

Maybe your local church or yourself, need to reevaluate your giving. How long has it been since you have increased it to meet the increased costs of living.

A Word to Our Missionaries and Christian Workers

Don’t Let Go of the Rope

Our enemy is a master of discouragement. Keep up your daily devotions. Share with a trusted friend if you are having difficulties. Don’t try and carry your burdens. Exchange yokes with our loving Lord. Give your yoke to Him and take His yoke. Bring all your cares to Him.

A Word to Us All

Every Believer needs to Maintain our Spiritual Rope to Our Lord Jesus. The days ahead are going to be tougher for Christians. We need to keep close to our Shepherd.

WHO CAN YOU HOLD THE ROPE FOR?

