

1 "WANTED: PEOPLE WHO KNOW THE ROPES"

(Acts 9:23-25)

"And after that many 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."

Saul of Tarsus had begun to taste his own medicine. He had been doling out large doses of suffering to Christians — and now he *is* one; and the tables are turned. "The Jews took counsel to kill him," and they tried a secret ambush to fulfill their desires. However, in the protective providence of God, someone "snitched" to Paul that they were watching the gate day and night to capture and kill him. "Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket." Get the picture. Here is the man who is to become the world's greatest Christian theologian, the world's greatest Christian philosopher, the world's greatest Christian teacher, the world's greatest Christian statesman, the world's greatest Christian missionary, the world's greatest Christian scholar — beginning his ministry as an absolute "basket case"!

Do you have any idea what an "ego blow" that basket ride was to Saul of Tarsus? He was a man of massive ego strength. With that ego strength, he had "progressed in Judaism above many my equals in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Galatians 1:14). With that ego strength, he had pursued a blameless religion before God (Philippians 3:4-6). With that ego strength, he had hounded Christians, both men and women, to trial and possible death (Acts 9:2), constantly "snorting out threats and violent murder against the disciples of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 9:1). And now, suddenly, he had been conscripted into a basket ride that struck a mighty blow at that ego strength.

Paul leaves us no doubt about what this basket episode meant to him. Many years later, he indicated that it was one of the greatest things that ever happened to him. II Corinthians 11 rehearsed some of "the things that happened" to him (Philippians 1:12). Beginning in verse 23 of II Corinthians 11, he said: "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

What an incredible list of sufferings! Why would anyone live like that if they could choose otherwise? Paul gives us the answer in verse 29, though it will take a hard pull to unravel the verse. "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" The New International Version says, "Who is led into sin without my intense concern?" Here is a classic example of the meaning of Christian compassion. Christian compassion is a spiritual game of

"musical chairs" in which, as Ezekiel said, "I sat where they sat." It means that I climb voluntarily inside the other person's skin (whoever he may be), and I look out at life through his eyes, I touch with his fingers, I feel with his feelings. This is what Jesus did for each of us! He zipped Himself up (fully God) inside a human skin and experienced what we experience.

Just this week, the home newspaper carried a Dennis the Menace cartoon which shows Dennis kneeling at his bedside in a stream of light flowing down from above, and he is saying very seriously, "So I figured You'll understand, having a boy of your own." And, great news, God does understand! He identified fully with us, becoming weak like us, and deeply wounded over our sins. When man "missed the mark" in his sins, the arrow in full flight turned aside and wounded the heart of God.

In II Corinthians 11:29, Paul practices a Christ-like compassion; he fully identifies with hurting humanity and accepts each man's hurt as his own. One little boy defined compassion as "Johnny's pain in my stomach," and he was right.

Read again the list of Paul's sufferings in II Corinthians 11:23-28. If you had a list of sufferings like that, and you had not yet reached a climax in the list, what do you suppose you would add? Listen to Paul: "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands." What an apparent anticlimax!

The basket episode looks "innocent" compared to all those other massive sufferings. What does this mean? Why so direct, so definite, so detailed an account of the basket story? Let me venture a calculated guess. In all those *other* sufferings, Paul could feel heroic and brave. "After all, I'm suffering for Jesus." And, unconsciously, credit would accrue to him for his sufferings. But in the basket story, heroism and boasting were out of the picture. The only thing he got out of that episode was abject embarrassment to his great pride.

Every child of God must suffer in one manner or another, to one degree or another, to break the hard shell of the self-life which encloses and encases the Presence of Jesus within him, and the only suffering that will accomplish God's purpose is the kind in which a sense of heroism is unthinkable and only abject embarrassment is experienced. You see, God is not out to *hurt* your *pride* - He is out to *kill* it! No man can hope for any deliverance from God that will save his pride. There is not the tiniest bit of pride in Heaven, and God will knock much of our pride out of us on the way to Heaven.

Here is an interesting feature in the story, and I will try to hang the rest of my message on something that emerges at this point. When Dr. Luke tells the story (Acts 9), he uses *one* word for a "basket," the word for a large, round, woven, wicker-work basket. However, when *Paul* tells the story in II Corinthians 11:32-33, he uses a quite different word for a basket. Paul's word means a "*rope* basket." Who was right? Well, who was in the basket? Luke wasn't concerned to tell what kind of basket it was; he just reports the story. But Paul's memory was vivid and fresh, and he noted the exact kind of basket it was.

Let's ponder Paul's technical word, a "*rope* basket." I want to introduce two strange categories of characters into our message on the basis of Paul's specific identification. You probably would not have thought of these two categories of people - but then, this is the message God has let me see. It has walloped my life with spiritual reality since the first day I saw it.

I. THE ROPE-MAKER

First, I want you to think of *the rope-maker* who is necessarily in the unseen background of this story. Would you ever have thought of him? License your imagination and make a sight-seeing trip down into the craftsman's district of Damascus. Down a long narrow street, you come upon a craftsman's shop. There is a business sign over the doorway: "_____, Ropemaker." You go in the front door and there is the counter at which he does much of his bargaining in selling or trading the ropes he has made. Go down the narrow, dim hallway and you come to a small room. In that room an ordinary man sits at a work desk. He is weaving strands of fabric into a rope. He works rapidly and skillfully. As each strand of rope is completed, he stretches it across the table and tests its strength with his weight as his hands spread as far apart on the new rope as possible.

Why do I mention him? The idea was triggered in my mind years ago by a tiny devotional thought I saw entitled, "Somebody Made a Good Rope." The little paragraph that followed that title opened with the question, "What if that rope had broken?" Great question! I have stood at the spot at the foot of the wall of Damascus beneath the very high window where (our guide said) Saul of Tarsus was lowered in a basket to run like a river rat under the umbrella of night, scurrying for his very life. If that rope had broken, either Paul would have died in the fall, or the sound of the crash would have brought the two soldiers nearest him from the chain of soldiers surrounding the city (Acts 9:24; II Cor. 11:32). The Jews would have killed him (Acts 9:24b), or the soldiers would have arrested him and disposed of him (II Cor. 11:32). However it occurred, we would have never heard of Paul the Apostle (I am speaking from a strictly human standpoint here). How much it meant to the world that Paul escaped!

Do you remember the line in Longfellow's poem about Paul Revere, "The fate of a nation was riding that night"? There was far, far more than the mere fate of a nation riding in that basket that carried Paul. So much of the world's spiritual welfare was in that basket. How crucially important it was that someone made a good rope! Who the craftsman was, we do not know (and that's all the better). He had no way of knowing what a part in the world's history his everyday, ordinary rope was to play. He had no idea that God was going to suspend the survival of the greatest Christian who has ever lived in a basket of ropes which he had woven with his own hands. What did he do? *He just made a good rope!*

Friends, if Christians are to be heard today in this wicked American nation, they will "earn the right" to be heard. How? By the quality of work they turn out at their daily workbench! By the skill, efficiency and attitude of their ropemaking.

A Catholic priest and a Baptist preacher were playing golf together. The priest was beating the preacher consistently by one or two strokes a hole. On the 15th green, the preacher noticed that the priest crossed himself before each putt. He also gave special note to the fact that

the priest putted much better than he did, winning by one or two putts on each hole. "If that works for him, maybe it would work for me," he thought. So, he secretly crossed himself. But still he three-putted and lost the hole. The same happened on the 16th, 17th, and 18th holes. "I want to ask you something," he boldly said to the priest. "How is it that you cross yourself before each putt, and you one-putt or two-putt each hole? I cross myself and I still lose by one or two putts on every hole. Why?" The priest answered, "Preacher, that's an easy one. You can cross yourself all you *want* to, but you still have to be *able to putt!*"

Friends, we can go through all the religious exercises imaginable, can invoke the blessing of God upon all we do, can be religiously unimpeachable, but all of our crossing of ourselves (our religious activities) will do absolutely no good if we are less than Christian at the daily work bench. It is there we earn respect for Christ, His Gospel, and His lifestyle.

In a large eastern city there was a rope factory which manufactured docking halters for ships - the vital, giant ropes which anchored the ship to the docking place. Over the entrance to that factory a message was printed: "The Worker in This Factory Weaves His Conscience into His Work - Because Lives Are at Stake."

What kind of ropemaker am I? My ropemaker is in the minister's "trade." What kind of daily work do I do? What kind of Christian craftsmen am I helping fellow Christians to become. The pastor-teacher's "job description" is in the word "equip" in Ephesians 4:12. The pastor-teacher's job is the "equipping of the saints (all believers) that they might do the work of the ministry for the upbuilding of the Body of Christ."

The word translated "equipping" is an enlarged form of the word "artis," from which we get our word "artisan." An artisan is a skilled craftsman. So, the business of a pastor-teacher is to turn every Christian near him, as much as possible, into a skilled craftsman in the way he handles, applies, and lives the Word of God. He is to help him to become like a skilled craftsman in the efficient way he "lives in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25), "walks in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16), is "led of the Spirit" (Romans 8:14), is "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). "The best way to tell that a man is carrying a full bucket is that his feet get wet." Our daily walk will either commend Christ to men or push them away from Him.

What kind of ropemaker are you? Are you making a good rope? If God were to suspend a modern-day Apostle Paul in a basket made of your rope, would he survive or perish?

II. THE ROPEHOLDERS.

The other category of people who play an important role in this text are *the ropemakers*. They are a bit more visible than the ropemakers. "The disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket." Let me "spiritualize" the account. That is, I will turn it into an illustration. In doing so, I want to ask — and answer — some five questions about the ropemakers.

From a spiritual perspective, *what is a ropeholder?* A ropeholder is one maturing (there is no "mature" Christian, only a maturing one) Christian who *cares for, sustains, protects, encourages, teaches, rebukes, corrects, rescues, builds, and invests his life in* a less mature Christian for the purpose of guaranteeing the less mature Christian a future possibility of maximum productivity for Christ. In short, a ropeholder is a Christ-centered disciple-maker.

Who were these ropeholders? Here's a good answer: we don't know! We don't have any identification except that they were "disciples." They are completely unknown by name. Scripture gives us no names; history offers no names; tradition doesn't even introduce them by name. These were anonymous people. And that is all the better! These ropes are best held by unsung, unheralded people. Recognition in the church and in the world are not necessary. The ropeholder's recognition will be in Heaven (I Cor. 4:5, "Then shall every man have praise of God").

Martha Mott is a faithful member of Speedway Terrace Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. She is a teacher's aide in a nearby elementary school, assisting a first-grade teacher. The kids lovingly call her "Mama Mott." One day, she was on the playground with the kids at recess, and she was asking them what they wanted to be when they grew up. One first-grade boy was a brilliant student of birds and could name and describe at least one bird for every letter in the alphabet. An expert on birds is called an "ornithologist." When Martha asked him what he wanted to be, he confused his word and said boldly, "I'm going to be an ordinary-thologist!"

The fact is that each of us is an ordinary-thologist. Most ropeholders are common folks like you and me. You see, you don't have to be in Who's Who to know what's what in Christian service. If you have a growing edge in which you are daily and dynamically walking with Jesus, and you are willing to invite someone to go with you, you can be a world-impacting ropeholder.

There is a great illustration of this in the early history of Israel. Two men who were representatives of Jehovah God were trapped inside the fortified pagan city of Jericho. If they had been captured, it would have meant certain death for them. They were running through the streets inside the city, desperately searching for a way out. They hurried to the door of a home that was built into Jericho's outside wall, hoping against hope that the resident there might have pity on them and help them to get out. When they knocked, a woman came to the door. They frantically explained their situation, explaining that the Jericho "police" were just behind them. The woman excitedly replied, "I have just come into covenant with your God! Certainly I will help. Come in quickly!"

They entered, she close the door, and she hurried them upstairs onto the flat roof where some grain was drying. "Lie down in these piles of flax, and I will cover you!" She spread the flax evenly over them, and just in time, for there was a loud rapping again at her front door. She hurried down, composed herself, answered the door, and feigned ignorance as the magistrates questioned her. They came in, searched for the two men throughout the house, didn't find them, and hurried away to look elsewhere. When they had departed, this woman opened a window in the outside wall of the city and let these two men down outside in a basket.

The two stories sound somewhat similar, don't they? Who was this woman? She would not easily be accepted in the typical church today. She was a prostitute, and her history would disqualify her from service in many churches. But, there was one thing she could do which no human being could prevent by rules and regulations. *She could hold ropes to save and secure the lives of others!*

Every parent should be a spiritual ropeholder. Every pastor should be a spiritual ropeholder and not merely an institution-builder. Every Sunday School teacher should be a spiritual ropeholder, not merely a teacher of lessons. Every Christian should be a ropeholder, not merely a self-centered survivor in the Christian life. Remember that a ropeholder is a people-builder, a disciple-maker. He does not merely count people; he qualitatively builds people who count. This necessitates close-up, long-term, visionary investment in people's lives.

Who were these disciples? We don't know, but they were ropeholders — and that is enough.

When did they hold the ropes? The verse says, "Then the disciples took him *by night*, and let him down by the wall in a basket." What an illustration! If there has ever been a spiritual nighttime, it is today. If the world has ever been dark, it is today. One newspaperman said about Europe at the beginning of World War II, "It was so dark that even the cats were running into each other!" It is that dark spiritually today. If God ever needed ropeholders, He needs them right now - people who will function faithfully "in the darkness" as little bright spots of spiritual light - quiet but efficient ropeholders.

How long did they hold the ropes? The answer is simple — they held the ropes until the basket hit the ground - until the thud was heard at the foot of the wall, or the rope slackened in their hands. In other words, they held the ropes *until the job was done*. When a man's life is at stake — as it was in our story — people who hold ropes in spurts and spasms, by starts and stops, with irregularity and erratically, are not only worthless but actually harmful. "It is required in stewards (managing ropes, in this case) that a man be found faithful" — not fitful or flashy, but faithful.

Just as Nehemiah stayed up on the wall — against all opposition — until the last brick was laid; just as Jesus stayed up on the Cross — against all opposition — until the last necessary drop of blood was shed, we must *faithfully* "stay at the window and measure out the ropes" until the job is done. Only eternity will reveal *what could have been done* if every born-again believer had been trained (and had trained others) to be an efficient, visionary, world-impacting reproducer of *other* efficient, visionary, world-impacting reproducers.

A ropeholder is a *Christian disciple who sees the masses through the man, and builds the man to impact the masses (through other individuals) to the ends of the earth until the end of time*. As long as sin is contemporary, sinners are lost, the world remains largely unevangelized, and Christians are untrained to hold the ropes, our job is not done. We must hold the ropes until the basket hits the ground.

Who was in the basket? To them, he was just a brand-new Christian who was proving to be a trouble-making upstart. To them, he was just a hot-hearted, hot-headed new believer who

got himself in trouble with the local authorities. Many veteran Christians today would have restrained Saul by saying, "Son, when you learn a little diplomacy, God will use you! When you learn to control yourself, God will use you!" This often means, "When you backslide far enough to get in tune with us, everything will be okay." A committee of veterans might say, "He will just have to learn the hard way. He made his bed; let him lie in it! He dug his own grave; let him be buried in it. He mixed his own poison; let him drink it!"

When I ask, "Who was in the basket?," today's Christian looks smug and says, "Oh, I know the answer. Anybody should know that one! It was the Apostle Paul!" But, did *they* know that? Certainly not! They had no way whatsoever of knowing that this man would scatter Christian churches all over the Roman empire like a sower sowing seeds in a field or a housewife sprinkling salt in a salad. They had no way of knowing he would be God's appointed missionary to the Gentile world. By the way, that is one of God's jokes on Mr. Worldly Wiseman and Mr. Carnally-Minded, because Paul was conspicuously equipped by nature, background, and training to be the Apostle to the *Jews*, but God disregarded those "credentials" and sent him instead to the Gentiles. These "disciples" didn't know the potential in this man. So what did they do? *They just faithfully held the ropes!*

If you never hold any ropes, you will never know whom God might have "put in your basket." Let me quote a long paragraph which will illustrate the possibilities. "The night was cold and the wind was blowing up a storm. Conrad Cotta, an esteemed citizen of a little town in Germany, was playing his flute while his wife Ursula was preparing supper. Suddenly they heard a sweet but weak voice singing outside, "Foxes to their holes have gone, every bird into its nest; but I have wandered here alone, and for me there is no rest." Hearing a light knock at their door, they opened it and saw a half-frozen, ragged lad who asked for charity in the name of Christ. 'Com in, young man,' said Mr. Cotta, "we'll give you some food and a place to stay tonight.' Ursula immediately began to prepare a meal, but before it was ready the boy fainted from weariness and hunger. They tenderly cared for him, gave him a nourishing broth, and put him to bed. They found later that he had wandered about for a long time, singing and living on the money that people gave to him. He seemed such a worthy teenager that they prayed about the matter and decided to treat him as their own son. They sent him to school, and he later entered a monastery. There he found a Bible which he read eagerly and from which he learned the blessed way of salvation. Unable to keep the good news to himself, he spread abroad the word that 'justified by faith' we can have 'peace with God through out Lord Jesus Christ.' Little did Conrad and Ursula know, when they took that young singer into their home in the name of Christ (Matthew 25:40), that they were nourishing the great champion of the Reformation; for that poor lad was none other than *Martin Luther!*" *But what if Conrad and Ursula Cotter had not held the ropes?*

Another illustration: "The old Scots minister climbed wearily into the pulpit. Bowed and dejected, he had just faced the harsh criticism of one of his deacons. 'Sir, there is something radically wrong with your ministry. Only one person has been saved this year, and he is only a boy.' The words stung the old minister deeply, for he too felt heartbroken that so few had responded to the Gospel; yet still he trusted God for the results.

The service concluded, but the weary man of God lingered on in the church, wondering if there was any point continuing in the ministry. A young lad saw him and waited behind.

‘Please, sir...’ ‘Yes, Robert?’ ‘Do you think if I worked hard for my education that I could ever become a preacher?’ ‘God bless you, my boy,’ replied the old man with tears in his eyes. ‘Yes, I think you will become a preacher!’

It was years later that an elderly missionary came back to London from Africa. He had pushed back the boundaries of geographical knowledge and brought savage chiefs under the influence of the Gospel of peace, given tribes the Bible in their own tongues; but most of all he had followed the Lord with all his heart. Robert Moffatt—‘only a boy,’ won to Christ and encouraged by a tired old man of God, had made a lasting mark on the world.

On one visit to England, Robert told of the need of Africa. Among those who heard him that day was a young Scottish medical student who had given his life to God for missionary service. Robert Moffatt’s words pierced his heart: ‘There is a vast plain to the north where I have sometimes see, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been.’ Filled with the vision of what God wanted him to do, the student asked Mr. Moffatt, ‘Would I do for Africa?’ The direction of David Livingstone’s life had been changed.

Who can tell what impact was made through the ministry of that old discouraged Scotsman? ‘Only a boy’ it seemed—yet far-off generations and tribes knew the effect of it! ”
But what if the old pastor had not held the ropes?

One day in the year 1865 a nervous Sunday School teacher walked down a Boston street to a shoe store. He had gone to see a dynamic but uneducated young shoe clerk whose ambition it was to make a million dollars selling shoes. The Sunday School teacher nervously hesitated outside, but finally built enough courage to go into the store. He found the young clerk on lunch break in the back of the store; and after stumbling through a greeting and mumbling a few introductory words, he faltered his way through a Gospel witness to the young clerk. The young man was like ripe fruit. He fell to the teacher's nervous touch, opened his heart to Christ, and was saved that day in the back of that shoe store. Few people ever remember the name of Edward Kimball, the Sunday School teacher; but every studious Christian has heard many, many times of Dwight L. Moody, perhaps the greatest evangelist up to that time in the history of the church. *What if Edward Kimball had not held the ropes?*

An old-fashioned, fighting, whiskey-bottle smashing evangelist named Mordecai Ham put up a tent in Charlotte, North Carolina, and held an evangelistic crusade. One night, a tall, gangling teenage boy and his short, heavy sidekick came stumbling "down the sawdust trail," fell into the altar, and gave their hearts to Christ. Not too many people remember Mordecai Ham today, but hardly a person in the civilized world doesn't recognize the face and the name of Billy Graham. Every time he preaches on TV, he preaches to an average audience of 90 million people. *But what if Mordecai Ham hadn't held the ropes?*

A young Jewish doctor was converted to Jesus Christ in a Siberian prison as a result of his own disillusionment with the Soviet socialist system and the Christian witness of a well-educated and kind fellow prisoner who spoke to him of a Jewish Messiah who had come to keep God's promises to Israel. We don't know this man's name, but his testimony was used of the Holy Spirit to guide the young Jewish doctor to Christ and to eternal life. As the doctor

progressively grew in the freedom of his new life, he opposed the brutality and inhumanity of many events in the prison. He also shared his own testimony with the few who would listen. One day, he met and treated a patient who had just had surgery for cancer of the intestines. The doctor's soul was stirred toward this patient, and he began to tell boldly what had happened to him. Though the patient was shaking with fever, he was captured by the doctor's testimony of conversion and freedom in Christ. The encounter lasted from afternoon until very late that night. The patient listened raptly to the doctor's incredible confession. Finally, he fell asleep.

The doctor never knew the response of his patient. That night, the doctor's head was smacked in by eight blows on the head with a plasterer's hammer. The deed was apparently done by some men who were angry that he was fighting against the Soviet system. But, his testimony and influence did not die with him. The patient pondered the doctor's last, dramatic, impassioned words about the miracle of new birth in Jesus Christ. As a result, he too became a Christian.

Today, very few people know the doctor's name (or the name of the one who led him to Christ). The name of Boris Kornfeld, the Jewish Christian doctor, will never be entered in the annals of history. According to the world's estimation, he was a failure, but "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). You see, Kornfeld's cancer patient not only survived that Siberian prison; he became one of the greatest Christian thinkers and spokesmen of the 20th Century — Alexander Solzhenitsyn. *But what if Boris Kornfeld - and the lesser known believer who brought him to Christ — had not held the ropes?*

Dawson Trotman was founder of the international Navigators, a Christian organization that majors on rope-holding, or disciple-making. "Daws" had worn himself out at 50 years of age, building disciples, training and dispatching men, and heading up Billy Graham's crusade follow-up efforts. He went to Word of Life's Schroon Lake Christian Camp to lead the East Coast Navigators Conference in 1956. While there, he and Jack Wyrzten, the camp owner, went out on the lake to ride and to water ski. On one ride around the lake, they filled the boat with conferees and started a roaring ride around the lake. When Dawson discovered one girl couldn't swim, he locked arms with the riders on either side of her for security. Suddenly, the boat made a fast turn and simultaneously smacked a big wave. The combined effect threw the girl who couldn't swim off the boat, and Dawson was thrown into the water with her. Dawson was an expert swimmer, and he assisted her until the boat returned. The others pulled her into the boat, but it had taken all of Dawson's depleted strength just to keep her head above water; and when they turned to retrieve him from the water, they couldn't find him in the darkness. He had sunk in sheer exhaustion and drowned.

Dawson Trotman's impact on people was amazing. The next issue of Time magazine after Dawson's death carried an article about his life and work. With his picture, they ran the caption, "Dawson Trotman: Always Holding Somebody Up." Daws Trotman was one of the world's great rope-holders.

One night, a man named Robert Newell ran out of gas on a lonely road. A friendly traveler came along, took a rope from the trunk of his car, and towed the stalled car almost thirty miles to the nearest garage. When Newell insisted that the man accept pay, he refused. He also

rejected Newell's offer to fill his gas tank. When Newell protested that he must be allowed to do something to return the kindness shown, the stranger said, "Well, if you really want to show your gratitude, *buy a rope and always carry it in your car.*"

Friends, are you "holding the ropes" for anybody? Do you have anyone in your basket? Isn't it time to "know the ropes" and hold the ropes for someone else? Will you close your hands around some ropes today? Will you willingly get rope-burns in your palms if somebody else can be saved and secured for Jesus and His purpose? Will you ask God to put somebody in your basket today and hold the ropes until the basket hits the ground? Who knows? Maybe God will let you recruit and train a 20th Century version of the Apostle Paul!

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