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GOD'S HELPERS

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

No man ever elected to get into stranger and more hazardous circumstances than did the Apostle Paul. His life was interspersed with a variety of hair-raising experiences. Whatever he touched took on the air of the extraordinary. Whenever he spoke, all who passed by stopped to listen.

From that noonday introduction to Jesus of Nazareth, Paul's had been a rugged, colorful existence. He started off with a hasty, improvised exit over the walls of Damascus. From then onward till his honorable departure from his field of battle, he moved from one crisis to another.

In prison often, shipwrecked, preaching before King Agrippa, caught up into the third Heaven . . . he could tell it better than any other. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, he recounts his experiences.

Paul is without a doubt the central figure around which the development and establishment of the Christian church moved for the first thirty years. But he was careful to take no praise or to attribute no honor to himself. He was constantly giving credit and making mention of those helpers in the Gospel with him.

Throughout the Bible, we have the accounts of mighty men whose names were immortalized by their achievements; but interwoven among these are unnumbered, insignificant, unnamed helpers,

forgotten by the world; yet who were a vital part of the kingdom work.

Paul was careful to give these forgotten helpers a prominent place in his writings:

In Jerusalem, it was good old Barnabas who recommended him to the apostles.

In Corinth, it was Aquilla and Priscilla.

In Thessalonica, there was Jason.

In Athens, there were Dionysius and Damaris.

In Philippi, there was Lydia and the Philippian jailer.

In Ephesus, there were the elders.

In Rome, there were some of the household of Caesar.

He included a mention of the faithful women and friends whom he left along the way to carry on his work long after the martyr's ax had ended his life.

In his letters, Paul is careful to mention the names of his helpers and to send them greetings and encouragement. In some cases he does not remember their names, but he does not forget their work and their help.

To the church at Philippi he writes: "I intreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life" (Philippians 4:3).

He couldn't remember all their names, and he knew that possibly the world would never hear of them; but he knew and was glad that their names were in the book of life. They were known to God and were citizens of that heavenly world.

Paul was a chosen vessel. He was God's man to bear a special message to the Gentile world. Paul knew and God knew that he would have to

have help to do it. All across the lands and seas where Paul traveled, God had a few men and women, unnamed and unknown to the rest of the world, but nevertheless, helpers to keep Paul going on with his message.

The chief concern of His life was the spread of that message and all who had a part in it were necessary helpers.

That night in Damascus, the plot was arranged; the trap was set; the news filtered in that there was no chance of escape for Paul. Every gate was guarded by night and by day. The searchers were out in the streets to hunt him down and kill him.

But somebody devised a plan of escape. They got a basket and some rope and put Paul inside, letting him down over the walls. They turned him loose into the world of men to perform a mission that they, themselves, could not do. We do not know who they were—just disciples—just some unnamed helpers; but we know what they did and that is what matters. Their task was a very significant one in the building of Christ's kingdom. They risked their lives, they took a desperate chance; but they saved the life of a mighty man who carried a message that would save the world. As Paul put it, their names were in the book of life.

Some ropemaker wove his threads well, fashioning ropes that would not break when the precious burden of this man's body was let down. Some basketmaker somewhere did his work well. He wove a basket so strong that it would carry a human body. He never knew that it would one day bear the body of the mighty Apostle to safety over the wall.

Too often we forget those who are not in the limelight. Not everyone can be a star of the bright-

est magnitude, yet each may shine in his sphere.

What about the unknown soldier? What about his unmarked grave on some foreign battlefield? What about that man who died alone in some fox-hole in no-man's-land. He was not a general. He was not a lieutenant. But he was a private—one of the helpers.

Some mighty evangelist comes along and with his high pressure sermon has a great revival. He writes it up and blazes it across the paper about the many souls he has brought to Christ. He forgets that it might have been some of God's helpers who prayed that revival down; some invalid, some shut-in, some praying mother who for long years prayed onward, upward into the night and God was answering her prayer.

Simon Peter might have wanted to take credit for the mighty revival of Pentecost at the home of Cornelius, but he didn't even get started preaching. He didn't bring the revival. God just wanted him there to see it.

Nobody says much about the innkeeper who cared for the wounded man brought to him by the Good Samaritan; yet his help was vital in the restoration of the wounded man. The Samaritan's good deed, though not to be minimized, would not have been complete without the help of the innkeeper to nurse the unfortunate victim back to health.

The world knows little about the humble shoe clerk who led D. L. Moody to Christ; but who has not heard the heartwarming story of the man who rocked the great city of Chicago for God, who became a world-renowned evangelist, and finally founded Moody Bible Institute.

Have you heard the story of an unnamed lay preacher, who on a snowy Sunday morning long

ago stood up to read a scripture selection to the dozen people who had braved the weather to come to church. Here is what he read: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22). A young lad who chanced to be present listened intently. As he trudged through the snow on his way home, the verse continued to ring in his mind. Through this hearing of the Word, the boy found Christ. Beginning to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ at the age of 16, Charles Haddon Spurgeon became one of the greatest British ministers who ever lived, preaching to tens of thousands every week. How did this happen? Because God had an unnamed helper who was instant in season and out of season in presenting the Word of God.

You may blaze a trail across the world and write your name high up on the walls of this world's honor roll and receive the acclaim of men, or you may be lost in the crowd among the common herd and the world may never hear from you. But remember, wherever you are—in the limelight or in a darkened corner, a leader of men or a follower, on a pedestal for all the world to see or in an obscure position unnoticed by one and all—you can be a helper.

You may not be able to preach a better sermon than anybody else; you may not be able to sing like an angel; you may not excel in any endeavor; but somewhere, you can be one of God's helpers.

God needs helpers. He needs basketmakers; He needs some ropemakers; God needs strong arms that will hold those ropes to let down the basket that the great plan of the kingdom might go on.

God needs helpers who will be on the job, always ready and willing to work for Him. God needs you.