Hanging on to One String

Barry D. Fike
Pepperdine University, barry.fike@pepperdine.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/religionworks

Part of the Christianity Commons

Recommended Citation
Fike, Barry D., "Hanging on to One String" (1986). Pepperdine University, Religion Division Faculty Scholarship. Paper 3.
https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/religionworks/3

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Religion at Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Religion Division Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact Katrina.Gallardo@pepperdine.edu, anna.speth@pepperdine.edu, linhgavin.do@pepperdine.edu.
The gifted concert violinist, Niccolo Paganini, was standing before a packed house surrounded by a full orchestra. He had played a number of difficult pieces, and it was now time to play one of his favorites—a violin concerto. His beautiful playing held the Italian audience in rapt attention. Shortly after he began, one of the strings on his violin snapped and dangled from the instrument. Relying on his genius, he improvised and played on the next three strings. But to his surprise, shortly thereafter a second string broke on his instrument. Now there were two strings dangling from his violin. Again he began to improvise and played the piece on the two remaining strings. As he neared the end of this magnificent concerto, a third string snapped. Now there were three dangling strings, and he finished the piece on only one string. The audience stood and applauded until their hands were numb, never thinking to ask for an encore. They expected to leave. As they sat down, Paganini held his instrument high in the air and said, “Paganini and one string!” He played a full encore with the orchestra accompaniment and made more music out of one string than many violinists ever could on four. His greatest moment was when he was down to one string!

Have you ever been down to one string in your life? Things happen, and one by one the strings that hold our cheery dispositions together break. We begin to pay more attention to the one, two, or three strings that are dangling than to the one that is still intact. That’s when we allow bitterness, sorrow, self-pity, and even blame to grow in our hearts. It’s easy to become upset when three of our strings snap. We feel that we deserve four strings like everybody else.

May I share a plain truth with you? There are very few four stringers out there! We are all struggling with broken strings. I guess many of us hide it better than others, but there are many times in all of our lives when we are down to one string. How do some people weather the storm so well while others are crushed under the load? The answer is attitude!

Your attitude toward life is very important, for it will affect your family, your marriage, and your spiritual life. Though we may have knowledge and wisdom like Solomon, if our attitude isn’t right we can only blame ourselves for our unhappiness. Men become failures because of their choices, not because of their circumstances. Whatever situation you are placed in, your attitude can lift your spirits or send you to the depths of despair.

Your attitude is more important than education, money, failure, success, or what other people think, say, or do. Attitudes cause churches to sink or soar! The saints can conquer the world or watch the church die. It all depends on our attitude!

There are many things that we cannot change no matter what we do—our past, the passage of time, our march toward death, and the way that people act toward us. Those things are the strings that dangle in our lives each day. The only thing left to do is to play on the one string we have, and that one string is our attitude. Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). Paul was the man who had that thorn in his flesh, who was shipwrecked, beaten, mocked, turned against by his own brethren, and much more; and he could still say that he could do all things! Paul realized that his life was about ten percent what happened to him and ninety percent how he reacted to it.

The same holds true for us today.

Every day we wake up we have choices to make. When those calamities, large or small, come our way, our attitude will mean everything to you and those around you. Remember that as Christians we are lights set up on a hill so that everyone can see us. We can act aggressively and blame others, or we can act in a positive way with great hope. But how do we begin this positive walk?

Let me offer you six suggestions that you can meditate on in light of God’s Word.

1. Deny yourself (Matt. 16:24). In the sports arena, any good athlete knows that to gain the temporal prizes he must deny himself the pleasures of the world and dedicate himself to the love of Christ. The same holds true for us today.

(Cont. on p. 21, col
member of 1 Corinthians 12 (Paul says there is no such thing in the spiritual body). The perception of the Christians is that all decisions made for them and they are not asked for, or allowed, input. Therefore, they don't give their money.

On the other hand, many leaders do not encourage involvement. They want to know everything that is going on; so there is no "letting go." They want to demand "followership" rather than earn it through service to the body and love for every member. This leadership model will be able to determine why members don't do, and why they are so critical. Because they have not been really asked—to serve and let ministry be theirs.

Growing, dynamic churches are characterized by members who take the initiative, and by leaders who grow and encourage growth. Look and you. Are there any movements to be made where you and I? Bob Mize—Spring, TX.

There is a lesson for us here. The gospel of Jesus is the most revolutionary message the world has ever received. But we have adopted a "library" model of the church, viewing ourselves as trustees of truth, or at best, instructors in it. Our treasured text is "chained" inside our churches. (Compare the Jews' relationship to their Law as described in Romans 2:17-20) The "library" model is inappropriate to the revolutionary ideology contained in the New Testament.

The Sermon on the Mount is a statement, not of truths to be believed so much as the truth we are to become in Christ. It is not a barricade against the world, but a broadcast within it.

I believe a more scriptural model of the church and its mission is the "Message" model. This is the image Paul employs in describing the Corinthians as "a letter from Christ" (2 Cor. 3:3). We are sent out to be "known and read by all men" (v. 2). Thus we are not trustees or teachers, so much as personal transmitters of truth. Where the stone tablets of old were "written with the finger of God" (Exod. 37:18), our hearts are now the writing tablet of "the Spirit of the living God."

From Common Sense to Communist Manifesto—the books which changed the world have this in common: they were not simply believed, or even obeyed, but embodied. Christ calls us to the same level of absolute enactment. The great choice facing the church is between two images of ourselves: Are we chained books, or living letters? The choice we make will either chain the Word, or change the world. /Shawn Jones—Houston, TX.

LOVED ONES IN THE MILITARY?

The AMEN Ministry works with faithful congregations of the churches of Christ whose members on military installations worldwide are waiting to help your loved ones—as they have helped with the spiritual and physical needs of thousands of others. This service is free!

Send name, address, phone number and spiritual condition, along with your name and address to:

AMEN
WHITE'S FERRY ROAD
CHURCH OF CHRIST
Box 2000
West Monroe, Louisiana 71294
American Military Evangelizing Nations

(Books and Letters, cont. from p. 13)

Military Evangelizing Nations.

(Books and Letters, cont. from p. 13)

(Books and Letters, cont. from p. 13)

(Books and Letters, cont. from p. 13)

(Hanging On, cont. from p. 18)