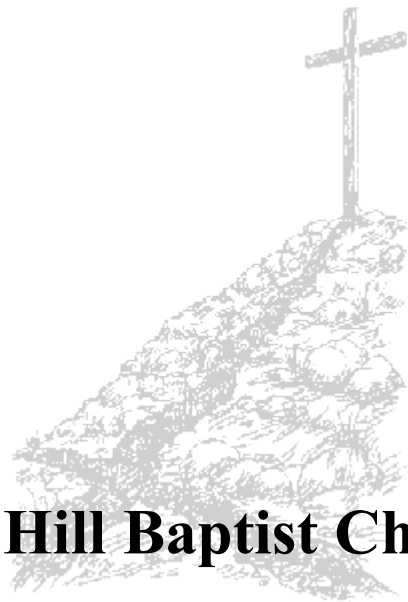


Message Of The Basket

Acts 9:22-27



Rock Hill Baptist Church

605 Rock Hill Road
Lexington, Tennessee 38351

Brother David Buffaloe
731-845-6104

bibleteacher.org

(Acts 9:22-27 KJV) "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. {23} And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: {24} But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. {25} Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket¹. {26} And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. {27} But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."

As I read this text, the most amusing and intriguing thing I find about it is *the basket*. Saul, who would become known as Paul the Apostle, had previously been saved by the mighty hand of God on Damascus Road. This man who, prior to his conversion was a strict Pharisee and an important man, is now escaping from Damascus in a - of all things - picnic basket! That's pretty much what *spuris* means - a basket that food was transported in. This is the same word used for the *baskets* that Jesus used when He multiplied the *seven loaves and a few fishes* in

(Matthew 15:36-37 KJV) "And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to

¹ spuris {pronounced spoo-rece'}, reed basket, lunch basket, hamper

the multitude. {37} And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets¹ full." (see also 16:10; Mark 8:8; 8:20)

What is amusing is that Saul/ Paul, a man who was perhaps one of the most influential and powerful Pharisees of his day:

(Philippians 3:5-6 KJV) "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; {6} Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."

is escaping from the city of Damascus *in a picnic basket*. But though this is amusing, there is a hard reality in the message of the basket. Lets look at that reality.

1. The Basket Emphasizes The World's Antagonism Toward Jesus Christ

Why was Paul in this picnic basket? Our text says:

(Acts 9:22-23 KJV) "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. {23} And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him"

Saul started out as the *chief prosecutor* of Christians, sent by the Jewish Court² to carry these alleged heretics to judgment. But something happened to Saul/ Paul on Damascus Road - he met the Lord Jesus. Robertson says in his commentary:

" 'Increased the more' (mallon enedunamouto). Imperfect passive indicative of *enedunamoo*, to receive power (late verb), progressive increase in strength as opposition grew. Saul's recantation stirred controversy and Saul grew in power. "

Before Saul was saved he was driven by hate, by worldliness, by religion without relationship with Christ, by the Old Sin Nature that exists in every person on this planet. In short - he was not driven by God, but by *the god of this world*, that old Devil Satan. Saul was *blinded* to salvation in Christ by the power of that old Devil.

1. Before Saul was saved he was driven by _____, by _____, by religion without relationship with Christ, by the Old Sin Nature that exists in every person on this planet. In short - he was not driven by God, but by *the god of this world*, that old Devil Satan. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

(2 Corinthians 4:3-4 KJV) "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: {4} In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of

² the Sanhedrin or Sanhedrim

Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

But the Devil's power was broken on Damascus Road. The Lord Jesus struck him down and, as He has done for over two thousand years, planted Himself in the hearts of those who believe. So Saul started growing in Christian power. Jesus was alive, and *in him*, and Saul told everyone he knew about Jesus. Here's a wonderful truth, believer. *The more you exercise your faith the more you will grow in Him.* As the Bible says:

(2 Peter 3:18 KJV) "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

The more you live your faith, the more powerful your faith becomes. Paul began to tell others about Jesus. In fact, Paul began to get *downright preachy about Jesus*. Our focal text tells us:

(Acts 9:27 KJV) ".... he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."

2. The more you live your faith, the more _____ your faith becomes. Paul began to tell others about Jesus. In fact, Paul began to get *downright preachy about Jesus*. **(2 Peter 3:18; Acts 9:27)**

Saul didn't do like many professors of Christianity do today. He was saved, so he told others about Jesus. And

this, our text tells us, *confounded* the Jews. The people who sent him to capture Christians, the Sanhedrin, were downright upset with Paul. Here their chief prosecutor had *turned traitor*. So they started watching the gates of the town of Damascus

(Acts 9:23-24 KJV) ... " the Jews took counsel to kill him: {24} But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him."

Let me explain this just a bit. In the ancient world most major cities had large walls around them to protect its citizens from attack by wandering hoards of bandits. Damascus was a *walled city*. The only way to get into or out of a walled city was *through its gates* - and the Pharisees were watching the gates, waiting for Paul to come out. Once he came out - he was a dead man! Nobody imagined that he would escape through a *window* in a picnic basket!

3. Damascus was a _____ city. The only way to get into or out of a walled city was *through its gates* - and the Pharisees were watching the gates, waiting for Paul to come out. Once he came out - he was a dead man! Nobody imagined that he would escape through a *window* in a _____! **(Acts 9:23-24)**

Here's the first lesson of the basket. In our world today Christians are being told that it is *unloving* and *intolerant* to preach that all men *need salvation*, and that

salvation can only be reached *by faith in Jesus Christ*. We are being told that such preaching is *hateful* because there are good people in other religions. I agree, there are morally upright people in other religions. But I want you to know this.

There is a *natural friction* between the Christian and the world. The Christian is a *new creature* by faith in Christ. The Christian is someone Whom the Holy Spirit of God has made *alive*, and now lives inside of us. The Christian is someone who is saved - not because he or she has earned or deserved it, but because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins on that Old Rugged Cross. The Bible says:

(Colossians 2:13-15 KJV) "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; {14} Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; {15} And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

The Christian is alive because *Christ* made him alive. The Christian is saved because *Christ* blotted out the handwriting of ordinances - that list of sins that were on our account - blotted them out with His own Blood. Not only that, Jesus Christ *spoiled* principalities, and casts down every demon and devil that plagues His dear

children. And Beloved, this confounds the unsaved world. This not only *confounds* them, it also *angers* the unsaved, angers them to the point where the believer is at least ridiculed, and at most his death is sought.

4. Jesus Christ *spoiled* _____, and casts down every demon and devil that plagues His dear children. And Beloved, this _____ the unsaved world. This not only *confounds* them, it also _____ the unsaved, angers them to the point where the believer is at least ridiculed, and at most his death is sought.
(Colossians 2:13-15)

These people wanted to kill Paul! Paul was let down out of a window so he could escape from Damascus because the *enemy stood at the gate* waiting to destroy him. It was not Paul that angered the Jews, it was Paul's *message*. It was the fact that Paul, as our focal text said:

(Acts 9:22 KJV) "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."

The change that came over Saul's life proved **the very Christ**, proved that Jesus Christ was Who He said He was - the Savior of the world. Just as those who were unsaved hated Jesus, they will hate those Whom Jesus saves. Our Lord said:

(John 15:18-20 KJV) "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. {19} If ye were of

the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. {20} Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

The Christian who lives his faith is *hated* by the world just as Jesus was *hated* by the world. But listen Brothers and Sisters, don't *take it personally*. It's not you the world hates, but Christ in you that the world hates. The believer, saved by faith in Christ, is saved so that he can live his life *outside of the world's ways*. The Christian is hated because the world is blind to Christ. It's a natural friction that Jesus promised we would experience.

5. The Christian who lives his faith is _____ by the world just as Jesus was *hated* by the world. But listen Brothers and Sisters, don't *take it* _____. It's not you the world hates, but Christ in you that the world hates. **(John 15:18-20; Acts 9:22)**

But the basket is necessary, Beloved, if you are in Christ and are living your life for Him.

In our current world so many *professors* and *preachers* are compromising the message of the Gospel in order to make it more acceptable to the world. The basket is necessary, dear Friends, for a compromised message will not save. The basket is necessary! If we change the message that Christ gave us, a message that clearly states

an exclusive salvation only through Jesus:

(John 14:6 KJV) "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

(Acts 4:10-12 KJV) "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. {11} This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. {12} Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

(John 3:17-18 KJV) "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. {18} He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

(John 10:7-9 KJV) "Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. {8} All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. {9} I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

6. The basket is necessary, dear Friends, for a compromised message will _____. The basket is necessary! (**John 14:6; Acts 4:10-12; John 3:17-18; 10:7-9**)

How intolerant! Kill him for preaching Jesus only! Yet the message rings out clear from the Word of God, *solo Christos, Christ alone!* This message has been a message of *hope for the perishing*, but it has been a *red flag* to the *bull of this world*. Jesus alone by faith alone!

2. The Basket Emphasizes Christian Love For One Another

Paul was in the basket because his life was in danger, but the basket also emphasizes another wonderful truth in the Word: Christians *must love one another* and support one another. We read in our text:

(Acts 9:25 KJV) "Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket³."

Beloved, the **disciples**, that is, the other Christian believers in Damascus *lowered* Saul in that basket. The world has made the Gospel - and thus the Christian - an enemy, but no Christian should ever be the enemy of another Christian. We are in this boat *together!* We must have one another if we are going to accomplish anything - nay, if we are going *to survive* in this lost and dying

³ spuris {pronounced spoo-rece'}, reed basket, lunch basket, hamper

world. Listen, the text says **the disciple[s]** - more than one disciple, but *several* lowered Saul down that wall in the basket. The text doesn't say that Saul *lowered himself*, for how could he be in the basket and yet lower himself?

God has called His believers - people saved by faith in Christ- to join together in the *local Church* and work toward a common goal. When we work together for Jesus we can do what God has called us to do. Someone has to be in the basket, but it takes many someones to lower the basket. It saddens me when people avoid the local Church until they find themselves in the hospital or with a loved one - or even oneself - at death's door. The local Church is called together to be the Body of Christ, each member supporting the other as we go through this life.

7. When we work together for Jesus we can do what God has called us to do. Someone has to be in the basket, but it takes _____ to lower the basket. (**Acts 9:25**)

Sooner or later you're going to find yourself in that basket with the enemy screaming for your life. The enemy may be the world, howling for your head. Or maybe the enemy will be the death of a child, or a spouse. There are many enemies in this life, and sooner or later you'll feel the wicker of the basket and see a wall that looks impossible to descend. When that day comes the loving friendships you have created with other believers in the local Church will help you get through those bad times. You need someone to *lower the basket*

for you.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit he told them this. He said:

(1 Corinthians 12:14 KJV) "For the body is not one member, but many."

The local Church is not just the pastor, nor the Sunday School teachers, nor the deacons. It is *many members* working together toward the common goal that God has set for them. Paul also wrote:

(1 Corinthians 12:26-27 KJV) "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. {27} Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

8. If a member suffers, the _____ suffers. In the Church the success of the Church depends on the _____ of every believer. In fact - it is _____ that Christ's Church work together to do His work. **(1 Corinthians 12:14, 26-27)**

The Body - the local Church - is knitted together by God. When I smash my finger with a hammer it doesn't just hurt my finger, but it hurts my whole body! If a member suffers, the whole body suffers. In the Church the success of the Church depends on the *willing obedience* of every believer. In fact - it is *critical* that Christ's

Church work together to do His work.

God has always used *several working together* to accomplish His purpose on the earth. Even Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, was preceded by John the Baptist. When Jesus left this earth He gave US the Great Commission:

(Matthew 28:18-20 KJV) "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. {19} Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: {20} Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

All power is given to Jesus - His is the *only power* that will save. He committed that Great Commission message to the local Church family, not just to the pastor or the deacons. The Lord tells us:

(Matthew 5:14-16 KJV) "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. {15} Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. {16} Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

(2 Corinthians 4:6-7 KJV) "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. {7} But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

(Ephesians 5:6-8 KJV) "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. {7} Be not ye therefore partakers with them. {8} For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:"

9. The world wallows in darkness, but the local Church is called to be Christ's _____, the organization that spreads the good news that Jesus saves! **(Matthew 28:18-20; 5:14-16; 2 Corinthians 4:6-7; Ephesians 5:6-8)**

The world wallows in darkness, but the local Church is called to be Christ's Witness, the organization that spreads the good news that Jesus saves!

3. The Basket Emphasizes The Provision of God

The last lesson of Saul's basket is this: we serve a good and loving God. The Lord, my Bible says,

(2 Peter 3:9 KJV) "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

It is God's Will that *all men* have an opportunity to be saved. When Jesus Christ left this earth the early Church was commissioned to preach the Gospel to the Jews *first*, then to the Gentiles (**Acts 1:8**). Sadly, this just wasn't happening. The Apostles were *very* reluctant to take the message to us - and that's just human nature. You see, people resist change. Jews saved by faith in Christ are nonetheless *conditioned by the Law* to stay away from Gentiles - or to make the Gentiles over again in their own Jewish image. When the Apostles *did* take the message of the Gospel to the Gentiles, they usually appended a *Jewish requirement* on our salvation. Peter told the Gentiles that we had to be circumcised (**see Galatians 2:11**). The Apostle James, head of the Church at Jerusalem, demanded that the Gentiles who were saved by faith avoid eating blood (**Acts 15:20**) and eating meat that had been offered in sacrifice to idols (**Acts 15:29**)⁴. In short, the Jews were reluctant to approach the Gentiles.

God decided to put a stop to this! God wants *all* to have an opportunity to accept or reject the Gospel of Christ. So the Lord chose Saul/ Paul to be His messenger to the

⁴ However, the Apostle Paul does command the Christian to avoid eating anything that could cause a weaker brother to fall away from the faith (**see 1 Corinthians 8:8-11**). Since the Body of Christ, the local Church, needs *peace* and *unity* to achieve its work for God, we as Christians must be careful to avoid doing anything that will unnecessarily bring disharmony into our Church.

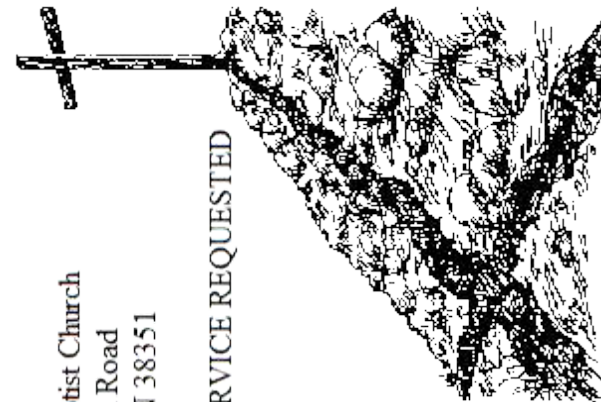
Gentiles. We read:

(Acts 9:15-16 KJV) "But the Lord said unto him ... he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: {16} For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

10. Saul in a picnic basket was God's way of showing His _____ for each one of us. Just as Jesus our Savior took a few fishes and seven loaves of bread and, in love, multiplied those things until there was enough to feed four thousand - God took one Jew converted on Damascus Road and multiplied him until many were saved. **(Acts 9:15-16)**

Saul in a picnic basket was God's way of showing His immense love for each one of us. Just as Jesus our Savior took a few fishes and seven loaves of bread and, in love, multiplied those things until there was enough to feed four thousand - God took one Jew converted on Damascus Road and multiplied him until many were saved.

Because God used His Church to save Saul, Saul became Paul the Apostle. That same Apostle wrote most of our New Testament (under inspiration of God the Holy Spirit). He was used in a mighty way to plant the local Church among the Gentiles - and it would not be an exaggeration to say that Paul is the reason I, and you, are in Christ today.



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