

"BASEBALL, JESUS, and GOING HOME!" 7 / 30 / 17

Acts 9: 1-9 (49th Sermon at 1st UMC, Jones.; 6/25/95; SERM_248; Sermon 757, 8/10/03; 1056, 7/22/07)
(1455, 7 / 29 / 12)

INTRODUCTION — I LOVE BASEBALL!! SOME YEARS AGO WAS JOSHUA'S FIRST EXPERIENCE in ORGANIZED BASEBALL— T-ball!! And I got to help COACH the team— and there were several kids of our church on other teams...

WE ADULTS had to learn a FEW THINGS about young boys and girls this spring. AT ONE GAME, ONE LITTLE GUY on our team MADE IT TO THIRD BASE on his turn— AND WHEN THE NEXT BATTER HIT THE BALL, SEVERAL OF US YELLED, "GO HOME, SON, GO HOME!!" HE STARTED CRYING, and RAN OFF THE FIELD, to HIS MOTHER'S CAR— WE "**KNOW-IT-ALL**" ADULTS JUST MEANT, "RUN FOR HOME PLATE," BUT—the LITTLE GUY DIDN'T KNOW the "**BASEBALL LINGO**" YET— THAT'S WHY HE WAS IN T-BALL!! HE thought he'd done SOMETHING WRONG and we were telling him to GO ON to HIS HOME!! WE WERE SUPPOSED to be TEACHING THOSE BOYS and GIRLS the BASICS ABOUT BASEBALL: WHERE THE BASES ARE, WHEN TO RUN (and WHEN NOT TO RUN), HOW TO THROW and CATCH and HIT... WE "**MATURE ADULTS**" LEARNED SOMETHING ABOUT COMMUNICATION, and GOOD INTENTIONS—>> but— MIS-GUIDED ACTIONS....

THERE'S MORE ABOUT BASEBALL TODAY, but let's FIRST look at our BIBLE LESSON— it tells of a PERSON who had GOOD INTENTIONS BUT HAD VERY MIS-GUIDED ACTIONS:

I. SAUL / PAUL, the Very Good Man—

A. Paul TELLS US how good he was —

1. ----->> in Philippians 3:4-6 — (read)

2. HE HAD DONE EVERYTHING RIGHT !! He had been born to the

RIGHT KIND of PARENTS— FAITHFUL JEWISH PEOPLE— WHO HAD

DONE all the “PROPER and RIGHTEOUS” THINGS for HIM—
— and he was ENTHUSIASTIC, even FANATICAL, ABOUT HIS FAITH!!

3. ACCORDING to the POPULAR THOUGHT of the DAY, he was a
RELIGIOUSLY “ PERFECT ” PERSON!!

B. Why, then, the DAMASCUS ROAD?? WELL..... SAUL of TARSUS :

1. (PAUL) HAD DONE EVERYTHING RIGHT up to this POINT in life,
EXCEPT: HE HAD FAILED to LEARN the NEW, BEST WAY
TO FULLY PLEASE GOD!! THROUGH GOD’S SON !!!

2. HE TRIED to PLEASE GOD as BEST as he COULD by **KEEPING**
the LAW of MOSES, by **the MOST EXTREME MANNER**—
by being a PHARISEE. WE look at Paul NOW and say ‘WHAT
a MIS-GUIDED PERSON he was.’ BUT, until he heard the
VOICE of JESUS on the DAMASCUS ROAD CORRECT him
and show him the TRUE WAY, that JESUS of NAZARETH IS
GOD’S SON who DIED on the CROSS to SAVE ALL
HUMANITY, and we must FOLLOW HIM EVERY DAY as HIS
DISCIPLES— **UNTIL SAUL of TARSUS LEARNED THIS,** he
HAD GOOD INTENTIONS— he was TRYING to be a godly person
the BEST WAY he could— by being almost FANATICAL in
KEEPING the OLD TESTAMENT LAW.

3. *HE DIDN’T KNOW HOW TO GET TO FIRST BASE , GOD’S WAY,*
and FROM THERE HOW TO GET HOME !!!!!

4. THIS IS the WAY we should look at people of OTHER
RELIGIONS— Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, etc. — as people
who are SEEKING GOD , but just HAVE NOT YET DISCOVERED
GOD’S MOST COMPLETE REVELATION of GOD’S SELF—
in JESUS CHRIST!!

C. FIRST BASE— and ALL the BASES (not original with me; used 75+ yrs.)
IN SOME WAYS, the CHRISTIAN LIFE IS LIKE BASEBALL!!!

---WHAT?!?!? YOU MAY NOT AGREE WITH EVERYTHING I SAY— but STAY WITH ME, and HEAR ME OUT. NOW, THINK OF IT: Compare the CHRISTIAN life to a BASEBALL DIAMOND— (*walk it out*)

1. FIRST BASE — is accepting JESUS CHRIST as LORD and SAVIOR — being CONVERTED, giving one's LIFE to CHRIST;

2. SECOND BASE — is PROFESSING YOUR FAITH in CHRIST, being BAPTIZED, or taking CONFIRMATION and JOINING the CHURCH...

3. THIRD BASE — is CHRISTIAN SERVICE, serving the LORD by being a LEADER or OFFICER in the church; by DISCOVERING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS THAT WILL HELP YOU BETTER SERVE the LORD;

or by HELPING OTHERS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE: **VISITING** or **SENDING CARDS** to the **SICK** or **SHUT-INS**. IT MIGHT BE

WITNESSING to the UNCHURCHED and UNSAVED; or bringing

or COMFORTING THOSE WHO HAVE LOST A LOVED ONE. IN SOME WAY, YOU SERVE GOD BY HELPING OTHERS IN THE NAME OF CHRIST.

3.b. — THIRD BASE — is where a most of the “ACTION” goes on!!!

LATER in that Chapter of Philippians 3, Paul wrote about “spiritual growth,” or John Wesley called it: “growing in holiness,”—or— “going onto perfection— perfection in love” as the MAIN GOAL and AIM of the Christian life.

Another great English Christian, C.S. Lewis, said something similar to John Wesley:

“...that we can, if we let God have His way, share in the life of Christ... Every Christian is to become a little Christ. *The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else.*” (*Mere Christianity*, p. 153)

4. FINALLY, HOME PLATE, then, is HEAVEN and ETERNAL LIFE!

II. FIRST BASE — and GOING ON HOME —

A. SAUL / PAUL'S MISTAKE —

1. — WAS TO THINK THAT HE COULD GET TO HEAVEN:

WITHOUT GOING THROUGH JESUS!!

2. PAUL THOUGHT THAT HE COULD KNOW GOD and DO GOD'S WILL BY PERSECUTING JESUS and His FOLLOWERS— the CHRISTIANS!

3. HE THOUGHT HE COULD HAVE GOD HIS WAY— PAUL'S WAY—
WITHOUT JESUS !!!!!!!!!!!

4. PAUL THOUGHT HE COULD “MAKE IT HOME” WITHOUT GOING TO
“FIRST BASE!!!!!!!!”

B. CAN WE GET HOME without STARTING with FIRST BASE??

WHAT DO YOU THINK ??????????????

C. DID YOU EVER HEAR ABOUT— The 1925 World Series:

1. PITTSBURGH was playing the WASHINGTON, D.C. SENATORS.

2. IT WAS the Bottom of the NINTH INNING; the SCORE WAS TIED.

3. The WASHINGTON TEAM was at BAT. *The BATTER HIT A HOME RUN!*

YOU CAN IMAGINE the EXCITEMENT and ELECTRICITY!!

4. HE RAN THE BASES QUICKLY, WITH THE CROWD ON THEIR FEET,
CHEERING and CLAPPING!!!

5. THEN THE MOST UNEXPECTED THING HAPPENED— AS THE BATTER
RACED HOME, the UMPIRE RULED the HOME-RUN HITTER
“OUT”!!!!

6. The huge crowd became UNRULY. “WHY??” they asked.

7. THE UMPIRE EXPLAINED: IN HIS HASTE TO ROUND the BASES,
the **BATTER HAD FAILED to TOUCH FIRST BASE!!!!** So the
PITTSBURGH FIRST BASEMAN TAGGED HIM “OUT” —
BY TOUCHING the BALL TO FIRST BASE!!!

8. PITTSBURGH WENT ON TO BEAT WASHINGTON IN THE SERIES,
4 games to 3.

D. YOU SEE: WE MUST FIND FIRST BASE in the GAME of LIFE:

1. We may lead **VERY GOOD LIVES**— go to church, support our church; be good, upstanding members of the community; buy Girl Scout cookies; be kind to **ELDERLY PEOPLE**; support our local **HOSPITAL**, etc. **WE CAN BE “PILLARS OF THE COMMUNITY”!!**
2. **BUT IF WE DON'T CALL ON JESUS CHRIST and REPENT OF OUR SINS and ASK JESUS to be our SAVIOR and OUR LORD, to ask JESUS to LEAD and GUIDE us in life, to make HIS PRIORITIES OUR PRIORITIES-**
3. **IF WE FAIL TO DO THIS, then we have tried to play the “GAME” of the CHRISTIAN LIFE, WHILE MISSING— FIRST BASE!!!**
4. **PAUL LEARNED, on that DAMASCUS ROAD, HOW ABSOLUTELY VITAL it is to GO FIRST TO FIRST BASE—**

AND TRUST JESUS CHRIST AS LORD and SAVIOR!!!!!!

CONCLUSION — — WHAT ABOUT YOU?????

HAVE YOU MADE THAT CONSCIOUS DECISION?????

DO YOU HAVE FRRIENDS, RELATIVES, ACQUAINTANCES,

or NEIGHBORS who DO NOT KNOW HOW TO GET TO

“FIRST BASE” with JESUS CHRIST!?!?