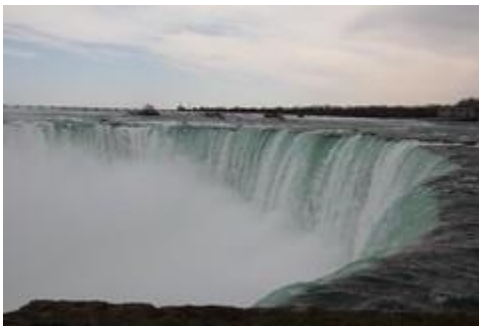


Pastor's Letter 12-13-19

I believe – but not that much ?

September 14, 1860 Niagara Falls, N.Y.

Can you imagine a tightrope stretched over a quarter of a mile and spanning the breadth of Niagara Falls. The thundering sound of pounding water drowning out all other sounds as you watch a man step on to the rope and walk across.



This is the amazing story of Charles Blondin, a famous French tightrope walker. As one anonymous writer explained, Blondin's greatest fame came on September 14, 1860, when he became the first person to cross a tightrope stretched 11,000 feet (over a quarter of a mile) across the mighty Niagara Falls. People from both Canada and America came from miles away to see this great feat.

He walked across, 160 feet above the falls, several times...each time with a different daring feat – once in a sack, on stilts, on a bicycle, in the dark, and blindfolded. One time he even carried a stove and cooked an omelet in the middle of the rope.

On July 15 he walked backwards across the tightrope to Canada and returned pushing a wheelbarrow! A large crowd gathered and the buzz of excitement ran along both sides of the river bank. The crowd "Oohed and aahed" as Blondin carefully walked across – one dangerous step after another – pushing a

wheelbarrow holding a sack of potatoes. Upon reaching the other side, the crowd's applause from 25,000 people was louder than the roar of the falls!

Then Blondin suddenly stopped and addressed his audience: "Do you believe that I can carry a person across in this wheelbarrow?"

The crowd enthusiastically yelled, "Yes! You are the greatest tightrope walker in the world!!"

So Blondin asked, "Who will volunteer to get into the wheelbarrow and go with me to the other side?" At that point, a hush of stone cold silence fell onto the crowd. No one volunteered.

Later in August of 1859, his friend and manager, Harry Colcord, did ride on Blondin's back across the Falls. On August 17th, Colcord was strapped to Blondin's back, and the pair set off across the tightrope, which sagged 60 feet in the middle of the crossing.

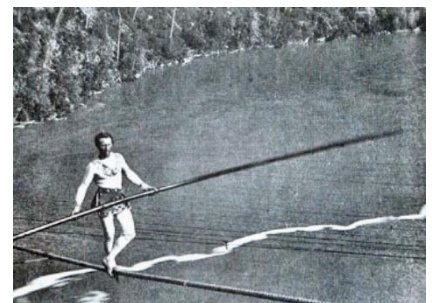
As they reached the halfway point – the most dangerous section of the rope – Blondin said to his friend, *"Harry, you are no longer Colcord; you are Blondin. Until I clear this place be a part of me – mind, body, and soul. If I sway, sway with me. Do not attempt to do any balancing yourself. If you do we shall both go down to our death."*

Harry trusted his wiser, more experienced friend, and carefully the Great Blondin continued along until at long last the pair reached the other side, safe and sound.

"Niagara Falls 2" by trailscape, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 *"Canadian side of the Niagara falls" by mith_y, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0*



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Sometimes God puts us on a tightrope in places that we would never choose to go. In John 21:18 Christ said He would allow this to happen to Peter. “And when you are old...others will take you where you don’t want to go” (NLT). Of course, David’s statement in Psalm 34:19 is reassuring as he states, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”

God sometimes allows us to face challenges and trials that would not be of our choosing. Sometimes God asks for us to get in His wheelbarrow to cross rivers of trouble and danger. On other occasions God *puts* us in His wheelbarrow, whether we are in the mood to go or not because God is more interested in developing our faith than He is in surrounding us with endless comfort zones. That is one reason so many brethren deal have to deal with health issues, financial challenges or, occasionally, with difficult people.

In I Corinthians 10:13 God says He will never place in front of us a challenge that we cannot handle (with His help, of course). But it is indeed possible for us to neglect God as well as His help. . . and, without God’s help we could fall off of the tightrope.



"In She Goes" by [Elizabeth/Table4Five](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Sometimes, after we have done everything that we can do, we need to heed the words of Moses when he told the panicking, faithless Israelites in Exodus 14:13, “Fear you not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord”. So, *Don’t be afraid of occasionally being in God’s wheelbarrow.*



Bob Lesman

Among our members are several people who cannot literally be with us for health reasons. One such person is Bob Lesman who currently lives in Arcadia, FL. Originally growing up in New York City, Bob has been in God's church for more than 50 years.

In 1974 Bob was accepted to Ambassador College. After finishing at the college, he continued to live in southern California until quite recently. For years he had a cleaning service and window washing business and extensively traveled throughout the U.S.

Prior to his church tenure Bob was a pitcher in the New York Yankee organization and at one point had the experience of pitching several innings in Yankee Stadium, striking out players who would go on to become major league all-stars.

In keeping with the theme of this week's pastor letter, *Bob has had to place himself in God's "wheelbarrow"* this month as he has registered at Sarasota's main hospital to go in for heart bypass surgery, aorta replacement and an aneurysm difficulty. There is no specific date for the operation but it could occur in the latter part of next week. Regardless, he asks for your prayers, not only for himself but others going through similar experiences. Bob is 72 and lives alone in Arcadia.

This past week the Council of Elders had a successful round of meetings at the Home Office. Treasurer Rick Shabi confirmed that financially the church is in a very good position with an unqualified opinion by outside auditors who recently examined the church's finances just as they do every year.



Meeting reports will be available on the Council website at coe.ucg.org.

Travel to the Philippines, Singapore and Hong Kong

This coming Tuesday, Darris and Debbie McNeely will accompany Bev and Vic Kubik on a visit to our congregations and ministry in the Philippines. They will conduct a five-day Pastoral Development Program for all Filipino pastors, their wives and congregational leaders. On the Sabbath, we are inviting our more than 500 *Beyond Today* subscribers to a Kingdom of God seminar in Manila.

From Manila, they will travel to Singapore to meet with our brethren. They were hoping to invite our 375 *BT* readers to a Kingdom of God seminar, but at this time public meetings like this are not recommended in Singapore. Finally, from Singapore they travel to Hong Kong where they are inviting our readers to a Kingdom of God seminar.

You can follow their progress on TravelArk at <http://v2.travelark.org/travel-blog/victorkubik/28> as well as Facebook and Twitter on this journey. Please pray for safe passage and propagation of the gospel on this journey. They hope to do several remote podcasts from these areas as well.

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This coming Sabbath, Mike Fike will be in Tallahassee, Gordon Hannaway will be in Ocala, Bob Orosz will be in Vero Beach and I will be in Ft. Myers.

The next local public Bible presentation discussing "Why Were You Born" will be in Ft. Myers on January 11, 2020 & in Vero Beach on January 25.

BV