



## “Hold My Mule!”

Dear Covenant Friends,

You may have never heard of the old phrase “*Hold My Mule.*” I hadn’t until just recently. It has been made popular in stories and songs. The instant I did, I saw its application to the Children of God for today. It seems to have originated in the deep American South in the late 19th or early 20th century. The implication is that the working farmer needed to stop plowing his field with his mule and go somewhere, or do something that was very important to them and even time sensitive. He would therefore ask someone nearby to *hold his mule* while they took care of the business at hand with something or someone in a timely fashion, or just - right now. Quite often it meant that the farmer was going to enter into a confrontation, be it verbal or physical. His pending issue was not something that could be ignored, overlooked, or postponed. However, to the country church members the phrase has come to mean that they were not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, nor were they embarrassed to show their expressions of worshiping God by singing, shouting, praying, dancing, praising the LORD, and crying out to God.

**DAVID THE KING** - *“It was told to King David, saying, ‘The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-Edom ... because of the Ark of God.’ So David went and brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom into the city of David with GLADNESS ... And David DANCED before the LORD with all his might ... So David and all the house of Israel brought up the Ark of the LORD with SHOUTING, and with the SOUND of the trumpet. As the Ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal, David’s wife and daughter of Saul, looked through a window and saw King David LEAPING and DANCING before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart ... Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal ... came out to meet David, and said, ‘How glorious was the King of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovered himself!’ And David said unto Michal, ‘It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy*

*father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I PLAY before the LORD. And I will yet be more vile than thus;”*

2 Samuel 6:12; 14a-16; 20-22a.

One could almost hear King David say, “*Wait! Here! Hold My Mule! I’m not embarrassed in my PRAISE to the LORD my God! He called me to be King over Israel! I don’t care how it looks, I’ve gotta DANCE, SING, and CELEBRATE unto my LORD for His Goodness and Mercy!!!*”

**DANIEL THE FAITHFUL** - *“It pleased Darius [king of the Chaldeans] to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes ... And over these [princes] three presidents; of whom Daniel was first ... Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful [to the king], Then said these men, ‘We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.’ Then they said unto the king, ‘All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.’ Wherefore King Darius signed the writing and the decree. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being OPEN in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he KNEELED upon his knees three times a day, and PRAYED, and gave THANKS before his God, as he did aforetime;”*

Daniel 6:1a; 2a; 3-4a; 5; 7-10.

Can’t you hear Daniel say, “*Hey prince, Hold My Mule! I’m not going to hide, I’m going to PRAY to my LORD and give THANKSGIVING for His Favor and Protection! It doesn’t matter what you say or what laws you make, I AM GOING TO SERVE MY LORD!*”

Which is more important: the laws of the land or the Law of the LORD? Our personal walk with the LORD or the opinions of our peers? Daniel didn't change his time of prayer and worship just because others, who were jealous and envious, conspired against him. And he didn't go into a closet where he could quietly pray in secrecy. Like then, today's public opinion has turned against Jesus, our Heavenly Father, and those who call themselves Christians. Do we stand up for our righteous values or line up with those coming against the teachings and morality of the Bible, God's Word?

**HOLD MY MULE** - This story that has become the 'folk lore' of 'Hold My Mule,' as told and sung by Shirley Caesar (and other artists) goes kind of like this, an 86 year old crusty dirt farmer named John decided to join the local small town church. This church was a very ultra-conservative, tight-laced, sophisticated, and a solemn assembly. A church where everything had a place, nothing was out of place, and there was order at all times. Even though John was old in their eyes, he was young at heart and full of the joy of the LORD. He went to church every Sunday grateful to be alive and eager to enter into praise and worship, which was not well received with those wearing starchy collars. As the quiet sermons progressed, John would get happy in the LORD and loudly proclaim praises and shout "Amen" with genuine joy and enthusiasm for the Word being preached, not for show, but in celebratory worship. This made the pastor, deacons, and leaders uncomfortable. They didn't want to offend the 'high-class,' 'rich,' and 'sophisticated' folks of the congregation. So, one day they made a trip to see old John on his farm. They pulled up in their fancy cars, dressed in their finest 'Sunday-go-to-meeting' clothes and found John plowing his 40 acres behind his faithful old mule. John stopped and said as they approached him wearing their faces of contempt, "I know why you've come." He continued, "You don't approve of my shouting - singing - and praising the LORD!" The head deacon stepped up and replied, "John, we do not act like that in our church. There are city dignitaries, rich folks, and very important people in our midst and they have a reputation to protect! If you don't stop shouting, dancing, singing, and praising God so loud, we are going to have to ban you from our church." With tears in his eyes, John answered in a broken voice, "Well, I guess you are just going to have to put me out because I can't hold my peace. Let me tell you why. Just look at this beautiful land that you just drove through. God gave me this land. Look over there at the house, see the kids and my wife that God gave me? God gave these blessings and they all love Him and have never given us any trouble. Look at me, I'm 86 years old. I'm in good health and still able to walk behind this old mule and harvest my crops and you don't want me to show Jesus how much I love Him in your church? Here Pastor, **Hold My Mule**, because I'm gonna sing and dance and shout and give thanks to my God right now. Yep, thank God He gave me beans, and greens, and livestock, and kids, and a loving wife, and a healthy body, and a sound mind, and lands, and barns, and trees, and ponds, and cattle, and pigs, and a mule, and chickens - ducks - geese, and peace. And deacons, He gave me LIFE eternal and I am gonna shout, dance,

*praise, and sing to my Father!!!!"*

**NOAH FULL OF GRACE** - *"The LORD said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the Earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth Me that I have made them.' But Noah found Grace in the Eyes of the LORD. God said unto Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the Earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the Earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood ... But with thee will I establish My covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee; And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark ... And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.' Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he,"*

Genesis 6:7a-8; 13a-14a; 18-19a; 21-22.

No doubt Noah said to one of his servants, "Here. **Hold My Mule!** I have a boat to build. Mankind has turned their backs on the LORD and sinned without measure, forsaking the values and teachings of God," (sounds like today, doesn't it). You can be sure that everyone in Mesopotamia laughed and mocked at 'Old man Noah' for undertaking something that had never been done before because there had never been a need for a boat before. "Perhaps he has gone squirrely in his old age." To which he might have replied, "Hey, don't make fun of me, my mule might just kick you if you get too close."

**SAMARITAN THE MERCIFUL** - *"Jesus answering [the lawyer] said, 'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead ... there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side ... likewise a Levite ... came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him,"*

Luke 10:30-34.

By now you know what is coming. The Samaritan certainly could have said to his servant, "Bro, **Hold My Mule!** This Jewish man needs help. Even though we are hated by the Jews, I must show him mercy and lend aid to him before he dies here in the ditch!" More than likely, other Samaritans would have given this guy grief for helping a Jew. But again, he had something important to do, a higher priority than just traveling on to his next destination.

**SAUL THE THREAT** - *"Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. As he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:*

he fell to the Earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?' Saul said, 'Who art thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.' And he trembling and astonished said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' And the Lord said unto him, 'Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.' And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. Saul arose from the Earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus," Acts 9:1-8.

Saul might have said, "Fellow Christian haters, Hold My Mule! The one that I can't see. I must go to Damascus!" Going against everything that Saul felt and believed, he knew he had run up against a higher power, the King of kings. Saul still could have stuck to his guns and demanded to go to the synagogues in Damascus to punish and persecute believers. He had a free will, just like you and me. But he chose to listen to the Voice of Jesus even though he did not understand what was going on, nor what was awaiting him.

[Sidebar: Do you know the differences between a horse, donkey, burro, mule, or hinny? There is only one species of domestic Horse, but around 400 different breeds that specialize in everything from pulling wagons to racing. Donkeys are more stoical [able to endure pain and hardship] in their behavior and tend to startle less than horses. Compared to horses, donkeys show limited fear response to novel situations and this can be mistaken for stubbornness rather than fear. Burros are wild – undomesticated – donkeys. A Mule is a hybrid breed between a male donkey and female horse. The mule inherits from the donkey his incredible strength, intelligence, patience, perseverance, endurance and surefootedness. A Hinny is a hybrid breed between a male horse and female donkey, smaller than a mule and with a quieter temperament. They are not as strong, move more slowly than mules, and tend to do things in a more thoughtful "donkey" way. This can make them seem stubborn and unpredictable. However, they aren't prone to spooking. Mules did exist in Biblical Old Testament days, as far back as 3500 BC but could not be bred in Israel because Leviticus 19:19 prohibits crossbreeding. Mules were in Israel and mentioned many times in the Bible but they all were imported.]

**ELIJAH THE PROPHET** - "It came to pass after many days, that the Word of the LORD came to Elijah ... saying, 'Go, show yourself unto (King) Ahab; and I will send rain upon the Earth (for the Earth had been dry for years). So Elijah went to show himself unto his king. King Ahab called Obadiah (the governor of his house) saying unto him, 'Go into the land, unto all fountains of water and brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and MULES and livestock. When Obadiah was on his way, Elijah met him and told him, 'Go, tell your lord the king, Behold, Elijah is here.' Obadiah feared the king for the king hated Elijah and he was afraid that the LORD would carry Elijah away to safety [again] and the king

would kill Obadiah instead. But Elijah assured him that he would stay and show himself to the king that day. So Obadiah went to meet King Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah. When Ahab saw Elijah he said unto him, 'Aren't you the prophet that troubles Israel?' To which Elijah answered, 'I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father's house have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and you have followed Baalim. Now therefore send and gather all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and all of the prophets of Baal (four hundred and fifty) and the prophets of the groves (four hundred) which eat at Queen Jezebel's table. Jezebel hated Elijah more than her husband the king. So King Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. Then Elijah came before all the nation of Israel and said, 'How long have you between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him: but if Baal is god then follow him.' And the people answered him not a word. [They were too weak minded to say anything]. Then said Elijah unto the people, 'I alone remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the Name of the LORD: and the God that answers by fire, then, let him be your God.' And all the people answered and said, 'It is well spoken.' Elijah told the prophets of Baal to choose one of the bullocks, dress it, put it on the wood that was on their altar, and then call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under it. And they did. From morning until noon they called, they cried, they prayed, and they leaped upon the altar saying, 'O Baal, hear us.' But there was no voice or answer. At noon Elijah mocked them, and said, 'Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, pursuing, on a journey, or peradventure he is sleeping, and you must wake him up.' And they did cry aloud and then began to cut themselves with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them and their altar. This continued until it was time for evening prayer and sacrifice and yet there was no answer to their futile actions. Elijah said unto all the people, 'Come near unto me.' And they did. He repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. Taking twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob and built an altar in the name of the LORD: making a deep trench about the altar. He then placed the wood and the cut pieces of the bullock on the altar and said, 'Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice.' And they did until the water ran round about the altar; and filled the trench. Then Elijah came near, and said, 'LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your Word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that Your people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their heart back to You again.' Then the Fire of the LORD fell, consuming the burnt sacrifice, the wood, the stones of the altar, the dust,

and licked up all of the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, 'The LORD, He is the God; the LORD, He is the God.' And Elijah said, 'Take all of the prophets of Baal to the brook Kishon.' Then Elijah said unto Ahab, 'Get up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain.'

[Taken from 1 Kings 18.]

Did you hear Elijah tell his servant, "Here, *Hold My Mule!* I must call fire down from Heaven and prove to these backslidden Israelites that the LORD is the one and only God of this nation." The Holy Spirit moves me every time I read this account of the prophet of God who had lived for the LORD [but hid himself in fear for his life at one point] makes his stand against the very people who had sworn to kill him. His faith in His LORD was stronger than his fear of his enemies. The LORD didn't move upon Elijah because He loved Elijah. No, God moved upon His prophet because God loves His people, His Nation, the very ones who had turned their backs on Him to follow the god of the land, but God did not turn His Back on them. Oh, did I just say that. The god of the land can be anything that turns us from the LORD, a false god (idol/entity), a false belief (something contrary to the Word of God), a law made for the flesh, and even a lazy spirit. Paul wrote, "*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,*" 2 Corinthians 10:5. The LORD loves us because we are His children. God loves the lost because He wants them to become His children.

The obedience of God's prophet didn't stop when the Heavenly fire cleaned up the altar. No, that was God showing man that God is GOD! The real job (work) of the prophet was just getting started. Elijah then walked away from his MULE and the altar to spend time in prayer until the rain promised by God had come, and it did. He was committed to see it through until the land was healed from the drought. True prayer, intercessory prayer is work. Oh, there can be joy and sweet communion during prayer, but the prayer of intercession is a labor of love and obedience, or in other words, it is work.

**DAVID THE YOUNGEST** - One more, you know the story, so, in the interest of time and space I'll tell it. The Philistines had taken a position against Israel in battle with both armies poised on opposite sides of the Elah Valley. David was the youngest of eight boys. The Word says that "*David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem,*" 1 Samuel 17:15. Then, for a month the Philistines sent Goliath to challenge and taunt Saul and his troops. Jesse (David's father) instructed David to take some food to his three brothers who were serving with Saul, and their captain. After David arrived, some soldiers told him of the giant who challenged and taunted them every day for a month. He inquired more of this enemy and of the reward that Saul offered to anyone who would defeat this behemoth of a man, which roused his brother. "*Eliab, [David's] eldest brother, heard when he spoke unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, 'Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilder-*

*ness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.'* David replied, 'What have I now done? Is there not a cause?' David turned from him toward another, and spoke after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner,"

1 Samuel 17:28-30.

Between you and me, I really think David told the other soldiers, *Here, Hold My Mule!* I must go down and conquer the enemy that is holding our troops at bay. It doesn't matter how big or ugly he is, I will win, for my LORD has proven Himself to be my Hedge and Protector time and time again!

I know that I'm talking to the choir, you know these stories and the Love of our Heavenly Father, the sacrifice of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit. We quote the Scriptures at length because there is Power in God's Word. And even though we have read it, know it, and may be able to recite it, reading it again renews God's Mercy in our mind and allows the Holy Spirit to refresh it in our spirit.

Today I've made a little jest with the "*Hold My Mule*" theme, but not without reason. For some time now, the messages that God has given me are to encourage and challenge the Church, the Body of Christ, my brothers and sisters in the LORD. God has opened the doors for me to present GTS and this ministry to several radio and TV programs and meetings in the next few weeks. The repeating theme, topic, that I have been asked to address is that of energizing Christians to get off of the couch and get out the door and into the *Harvest Fields* to witness of the Love, Mercy, Grace, and Forgiveness of our Heavenly Father and the price that Jesus paid for us, yes, you, me, and every sinner that has not come to the Cross of Calvary.

What will it take for you to say, "*Here, Hold My Mule!* I must be about my Father's Business?" We have thousands of Gospel Tracts, comic books, and activity books for you to use in your *Harvest Field*. All you have to do is ask and you will receive. If you don't know how or where to witness, ask, we can help with suggestions on reaching, talking to others. Don't let the **blood** of the lost be on your hands when you stand before Jesus, just because you didn't reach out to them when the Holy Spirit led you to so.

*"Father, I pray that you would take these few words and move upon Your Children to realize the shortness of time and begin to be about Your Business of winning souls for You. Move upon us all to hear Your Holy Spirit and reach out to others. Help us to humble ourselves before You and work for Your Kingdom while there is still time to work. In the priceless Name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."*

Please *Hold My Mule* for I must pray, praise, shout, sing, dance, go, weep, stand, cry, heal, serve, call, build, lead, save, AND worship my LORD who has given me strength and breath for another day!!!

Your Covenant Brother in Jesus Christ,

Phillip Buttram

Phillip L Buttram