

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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Remember to maintain three points of contact! That was the advice that tourists were given aboard the White Pass & Yukon Route Railway, or the *Skagway Train* as I had once heard it called. I learned about this train and the story behind its construction many years before when I read James Michener’s novel *Alaska*. And other than passing through the Anchorage airport in the middle of the night while en route to South Korea, I had never spent much time in Alaska, but dreamt that one day perhaps I would. So imagine my excitement when in the summer of 2016 Sharon and I were blessed by my secular employer and received an Alaska cruise. The Skagway Train was on our list of things to do and see while in port partaking in some of the shore excursions. I love a train.

Once upon the Skagway Train the conductor gave instructions about what to expect during the train ride. I remembered the advice about three points of contact. I remembered the principle that he elaborated on. It was explained that if you were standing, or moving, on a moving train, it’s very important to maintain three points of contact so we wouldn’t lose our balance. Either two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand, should always be in contact with the moving train. It would increase stability in an unstable ride. Like I said...I remembered what he said...till he said that once the train began to move, those who wanted to take pictures from outside the car could stand on the platform. Then he reiterated to please *remember to maintain three points of contact!* I think I forgot that last repeated phrase. I could hardly wait to get outside and take those pictures!

The breathtaking scenery going up that mountain was like being in the middle of a moving picture show. Standing out on the platform I was busily taking pictures and video recording of the mountain sides and the trails that the Gold Rush miners and prospectors climbed up in the late 1890s. I was rocking back and forth on that rail car platform and holding on to that camera with one hand, the side rail with the other hand, and two feet firmly planted on the floor of the platform. Three points of contact! At least until I saw a scene that needed video recording. It would require that I lean against the rail taking the shot as the train went around a curve. I took my hand off the rail and brought it up to join my other hand helping me hold on securely to the camera. I was thinking that *leaning* against the rail was as good as *clinging* to it. That’s when the most memorable part of the Skagway Train Ride is branded in my brain.

I can still close my eyes and see it...even feel it...when the spring-loaded clip attached to my belt which held my iPhone in its holster snapped open under the pressure of leaning on that rail. Suddenly the phone popped out and landed close to my right foot. As I looked down in horror, I watched as it teetered and tottered, halfway on the platform and halfway off. In slow motion I began to bend down and as my hand was within inches of the cell phone, the train lurched in its uphill climb, rocking on the rails, and the iPhone pitched off the side and landed a few feet from the rail. I watched it as we moved away. Soon I couldn’t see it anymore. As far as I know it still lies somewhere close to mile marker 17.5, pretty close to Dead Horse Gulch, where an estimated 3,000 horses died trying to cross the pass. It’s hard to lose your cell phone...your contacts, email, text messages, music, schedules and such. But it’s harder to lose your life. Here’s the lesson. Life is truly like a mountain railway. And we can become distracted with this world’s scenery and systems and forget the principle of three points of contact. To enjoy life on this earth we must remember that we need to be connected to God to maintain a balance of being both earthly and spiritual creatures. How does an earthbound creature ever hope to touch the goodness of God? Consider Job’s question when so many unexpected jolts in his journey and inexplicable troubles brought him to places of loss beyond his comprehension.

Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. (Job 9:33, KJV)

The third point of contact between man and God...the God Man Christ Jesus. No wonder so many people are losing their balance...and losing their lives. They are not in touch with the Lord Jesus. The very good news is that we can *lean* on Him but it’s best to *cling* to Him...Better yet, rejoice that He is clinging to us with a grip that death cannot break. Like the song, *I’m not holding on to Jesus...He’s holding on to me.*

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam