

Holding On

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Let's start by watching a video from the fourth tallest mountain in the world at 27,940 ft. If you're reading this, then you won't be able to see the video. It's a video of a mountain climber hammering in a spike into ice so a rope can be attached to it. Then the climbers that are behind can grab hold of the rope to reach the point more safely. In this video, the climbers are above the clouds and the fall from a climber would be certain death. This thin rope will be the only thing that keeps these climbers from being more anxious about the dangerous climb. If I was there, I would have a death hold on that rope and pray that small spike holds on – remember, it's hammered into ice. That would make me more anxious. When we become anxious, one issue that seems to pop up is we start to question ourselves or what we truly believe in. I heard someone being interviewed on TV that had stated they started to question God when a close family member had passed away. They were trying to hold on to the little faith they still had, but the worry and the pain was too much and they lost that small faith. A writer once wrote this, "Do not live in anxiety – live in faith". For those who are trying to hold on, these words can seem so small. Last week, we had talked about the Thessalonians and how Paul was trying to help them or give them encouragement during persecution and suffering. We then talked about how important it is to have the right frame of mind at the beginning of the trial or suffering. Just like the video of the mountain climbers. If you are not in the right frame of mind, you'll never be able to survive climbing a mountain over 25,000 ft high. We need our minds to be always being renewed as Paul called it or we can say our minds need an update to be able to have the right mind set. In fact, we can go a step further on this by looking at what Paul states in 1 Corinthians 2: 16, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ. (NASB)" The mind of Christ can be translated as "understanding" as well. In other words, Jesus will give us the ability to understand some of the things of God and this life through the Holy Spirit which requires faith on our part. To be able to

receive understanding from Jesus who suffered on a horrible cross will help us to view suffering and trials as Jesus saw them on the cross – the mind of Christ. We need the mind of Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit will sprinkle in His thoughts with our thoughts. This in turn will force us to start questioning our negative thinking and prompt us to seek a better source of thinking. Of course, it's better to just ask before this has to happen for a renewing of the mind. We have to realize the need for this because if we reject the Spirit for mental help, some bad things can happen. For some examples, let's turn to 2 Thessalonians 2: 1-4 where we read this, "2 Now we ask you, brothers *and sisters*, regarding the ^[a]coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your ^[b]composure or be disturbed either by a spirit, or a ^[c]message, or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ No one is to deceive you in any way! *For it will not come* unless the ^[d]apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above ^[e]every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)" Here we have Paul addressing the coming of Jesus again in this second letter. Paul had already gone over this in his first letter. So, this tells me this was a major issue within the Church. Some thought the day of the Lord already happened and some thought Jesus was coming back in their own lifetime. So, Paul tells them not to become unsettled or alarmed by the false teaching that was going around. They were becoming anxious over this important issue. If we look forward to our day, we still become anxious over things we don't understand. When we become sick or lose a job or having marriage issues, we can become anxious which causes us to become unsettled and alarmed. One time, I was hiking up a mountain out West when I came upon a Ranger tower. To get to the Ranger tower, you had to hike a very narrow path where on both sides had a drop of about 1000 ft or more. I started to focus on the drop and I could feel myself becoming anxious which caused me to become unsettled mentally, which in turn was causing me to slowly become unbalanced. I felt like I was going to fall. I didn't lose my footing, but my unsettled mind was causing me to become unbalance to the point I felt like I was

going to fall. I had to stop for a moment and regroup. I focused on the tower instead of the valleys below and I had no trouble finishing the hike to the tower. When we allow ourselves to become unsettled because of anxiety, it's easier to fall. Let's put suffering and trials in the place of hiking a mountain. When we become unsettled because of anxiety, it becomes easier to be deceived. Paul states in verse 3 to not let anyone deceive us in any way. For the Thessalonians, Paul didn't want them to be deceived to false teaching in this weak condition. We have to understand here that when we become anxious and then unsettled, we are in a weak condition. We can become easily deceived. I knew someone who became very sick. There was no cure for this sickness. They could ease the problem by a special diet and other life changes. However, the sickness could get worse and cause death. This person became anxious and unsettled as most of us would. They started to go to special healing services that were advertised on TV and radio. These people merchandise their false talent very well and they deceive many people. This is why when you do research on the people who do the so called healing, they are very rich and live in multimillion dollar mansions. They deceive many people who are at their weakest point mentally. Paul knew we have our weak moments. This is why mental updates through the Holy Spirit is so important when we are trying to hang on during sufferings and trials. However, there is more.

Let's continue and turn to 2 Thessalonians 2: 5-12 where we read this, "5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? 6 And you know what restrains *him* now, so that he will be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only [f]He who now restrains *will do so* until [g]He is [h]removed. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will eliminate with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His [i]coming; 9 *that is*, the one whose [i]coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and false [k]signs and wonders, 10 and with [l]all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this reason God [m]will send upon them [n]a deluding influence so that they will believe [o]what is false, 12 in order that they all may be [p]judged who did not

believe the truth, but ^[a]took pleasure in wickedness. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

Here, we have Paul telling the Church that satan will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders to serve his lie. Paul, again is talking about the day of the Lord. Satan was attacking the Church with false teaching trying to deceive them. We have already talked about how we can cause our own problems when we become unsettled by anxiety by thinking our own thoughts without the help of the Holy Spirit. We focus so much on the problem, we cause more harm than good. Satan also takes advantage of our weakened state and he tries to deceive us with false teaching like I must be getting punished because of a sin or God no longer loves me or God is mean and the list can go on and on. What gets me upset is how satan will attack us when we are hurting and sad. He is vicious and mean and will show no mercy. Paul calls satan the lawless one in verse 9. We saw that video at the beginning. Think about several climbers using that rope that is anchored in the ice by a spike. Satan would be the one trying to pull that spike out. He sees all those climbers trying to hold on that rope and it's the only thing keeping them alive. When satan sees us trying to hang on during suffering and trials, he'll try to cut the rope. When a love one passes away, he is the one trying to destroy our faith with every resource he has because he knows we are at a weak moment.

So, Paul gives the Thessalonians some guidance, so let's turn to 2 Thessalonians 2: 13-17, ¹³ But we should always give thanks to God for you, brothers *and sisters* beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you ^[f]from the beginning for salvation ^[s]through sanctification ^[t]by the Spirit and faith in the truth. ¹⁴ It was for this He called you through our gospel, ^[u]that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers *and sisters*, stand firm and hold on to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter ^[v]from us.

¹⁶ Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, ¹⁷ comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

When we're going through suffering and trials, we must hold on to the truth. When you receive the gift of salvation, you have the resource of God's truth available to you. I don't know a better place to go than to prayer and to the Bible. We need something that we can fully believe and know we will not be lead astray. We need something we know will not deceive us. I'm sorry, but our smart phones is not something we can depend on. Paul knew the Church needed something to hold on to that would at the same time take a hold of them. This is how I view holding on to the truth of God during suffering and trials. Not only do we hold on to His truth, but He holds onto us as well. There is a wonderful piece of Scripture that paints a picture of this in Isaiah 41: 10, "Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you. Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. (NASB)" This is a faith issue. We need to pray that the suffering and trials we go through will strengthen our faith so we can realize He is holding us up with His righteous right hand. This is truth that Paul wants the Church to rest upon. Scripture is full of truth that can help us in any suffering or trial. His hand will hold unto you and that is a great truth. You don't have to hang on by yourself. His truth will not deceive us. When our mind is filled with His truth, we'll be able to face any type of suffering and trial. Let's keep praying for the renewing of our minds through Jesus by the working of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2: 16, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ. (NASB)"