

Keep Going On – Moving On

06/21/26

I would like to start this sermon with part of the Gettysburg Address that was given by President Abraham Lincoln on Nov. 19, 1863:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle – field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

This part of the speech came from a man that was going through horrible battles. He was someone who was trying to bring a divided nation together. Lincoln received many letters from parents and spouses asking about their sons and husbands on their status (if they were died or alive) and where they were buried if they had died in battle. Not only that, but Lincoln was a father as well. During the Civil War, the water supply in Washington D.C. became contaminated. Lincoln's son Willie became sick and died from what was believed to be typhoid on February 20, 1862. Willie was buried in the Capital. When Lincoln was assassinated in 1865, they exhumed his son and his son's remains were on the same train that carried Lincoln to Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois to be buried. I often thought what helped Lincoln to keep going on as a President. His own son died and he had made the decision that caused many parents to lose their sons in a war. What kept him going? In a letter that he wrote on June 28, 1862, we read this: I expect to maintain this contest until successful, or till I die, or am conquered, or my term expires, or Congress or the country forsakes me... I wonder if President Lincoln ever had mornings where he didn't want to get out of bed. It would have been so easy to just quit. Sometimes, followers of Jesus Christ can feel like just giving up. It's so easy. It is the easy way out. Last week, we talked about how hard it is to just hold on. Now, we'll look at how we are to hold on, but we must keep going at the same time.

We'll be finishing with Paul's letters to the Thessalonians this morning. Let's turn to 2 Thessalonians 3: 1-5 to get started. Paul states this as he finishes his second letter to the Thessalonians, "3 Finally, brothers *and sisters*, pray for us that the word of the Lord will ^[a]spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it was* also with you; ² and that we will be rescued from troublesome and evil people; for not all have the faith. ³ But the Lord is faithful, ^[b] and He will strengthen and protect you ^[c] from the evil one. ⁴ We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing, and will do, what we command. ⁵ May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the perseverance of Christ. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

As we finish this letter, let's remember we had talked about how Paul addressed some of the false teaching about Jesus' return. Plus, Paul had to bring encouragement to this Church because of the persecution the Church had to face every day because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Then, Paul told them about satan and how he will try with everything he has to attack the Church. So, we know that the Thessalonians were going through some trying times in a very pagan world. Abraham Lincoln was going through trying times as well, but in a different time and place. Not only did Lincoln had trying times as being a President, but he had trying times as a parent as well – trying to keep the family together after the death of a son. We, too are going through trying times as well, but maybe not as trying – yet. There is a danger of just holding on. If you remember last week, we had a video of a mountain climber at about 27,000 feet trying to hammer in a spike in ice to put a rope on it for the other climbers to hold on to. Knowing me, I would hold on that rope, but I wouldn't move from that spot. It would be safer to hold on and not move – my thought. However, if I stayed there at that spot and not move, at some point I would freeze to death due to the harsh cold. I would have to move on. You see Paul knew for the Church to survive, they had to hold on, but they had to keep moving as well. It is so easy for churches to just hold on, but not move. Sometimes, moving while holding on takes some risks even though one is still holding onto a rope for safety. Paul knew this so he closed this letter by giving them some suggestions. One, is prayer. We see in verse 1 that Paul asks the Church to pray for him and for those working with him. Paul adds to pray for them so that the message would continue to be spread. When we just hold on and don't move in a church, it hurts the movement of the Gospel Message. Paul's mission was to spread Jesus wherever he went. Do we spread the Message or are we just holding on? Then Paul asks them to pray that they be delivered from the wicked people around them, who satan uses to stop the spread of the Gospel

Message. In other words, for a church to keep going during persecution or suffering requires those within the church to be praying for each other. Prayer is what keeps us moving while holding on.

Why do we pray? Well, Paul tells us that we pray because the Lord is faithful (verse 3) and He will strengthen and protect those we pray for. Those climbers on that tall mountain know that rope to attached to a spike that is hammered into ice. This gives them confidence to move on (not me). What would give me confidence would be knowing people are praying for me that the Lord would protect and strengthen me because I know what the Lord can do. This is one thing a small church can do better at than a very large church. We can pray for each other by name. Some years ago, I had put a co- worker that was going through cancer. I told him I had put him on the church prayer list. After some weeks of treatments, I had asked him how he was doing. He told me that he could feel the prayers from my small church. He would say this several more times during his sickness and he really meant it. He was thankful for those prayers. It gave him encouragement to hold on and to keep moving even during the times he was sick because of the treatments for cancer. Prayer is key for us to keep moving while holding on. Abraham Lincoln stated this about prayer, "I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life." There's more.

Let's continue with Paul and look at 2 Thessalonians 3: 6-15 where we read this, "6 Now we command you, brothers *and sisters*, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you ^[d]keep away from every brother *or sister* who ^[e]leads a ^[f]disorderly life and not *one* in accordance with the tradition which ^[g]you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to ^[h]follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined way among you, 8 nor did we eat ^[i]anyone's bread ^[j]without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept working* night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; 9 not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a role model for you, so that you would ^[k]follow our example. 10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12 Now we command and exhort such persons in the Lord Jesus Christ to work ^[l]peacefully and eat their own bread. 13 But as for you, brothers *and sisters*, do not grow weary of doing good.

¹⁴ If anyone does not obey our ^[m]instruction ^[n]in this letter, take special note of that person so as not to associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. ¹⁵ And yet do not regard *that person* as an enemy, but ^[o]admonish *that one* as a brother or sister. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

Not only do we pray for each other, but we also lead by example. Paul tells the church here that they were to follow him and his fellow workers' example of keep moving while holding on. Paul makes it very plain in verse 6 that they were to stay away from idle and disruptive members. A lot of the time, idle people are the ones who complain the most about everything. Paul told the church to stay away from them because they keep people from wanting to move on. Paul tells us plainly in verse 9 that they became a model for those around them to imitate. If you don't like complaining people, make sure you don't become one. We are to be a model around us even during suffering and trials. Non-believers will pay attention to Christians when they are suffering to see how they handle it. We are under constant surveillance. We don't want anything to hurt the message of Jesus and includes our actions during trials and sufferings. We should pray that we become salt during our own suffering and trials to those watching us. We do this to bring glory and honor to Jesus Christ. In fact, Paul adds in verse 13 that we should never tire in doing good. It's hard to do good while holding on and staying at the same location. One of those climbers had to make the choice to go to the tip of that mountain to hammer a spike in. Then the rest followed. Paul states that those who are idle are not busy, they are busybodies in verse 11. When the people of a church become idle or just holding on, they spend their time looking at those who are working. Paul tells the church to stay away from them in verse 14. Some may think this is harsh, but Paul was concerned about the mission of the Church which was given to it by Jesus Himself – go and make disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28: 18). Paul didn't want that mission stopped or watered down. In other words, we stay active in the mission Jesus has sent before us.

Let's finish with this from Paul (2 Thessalonians 3: 16-18), ¹⁶ Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every ^[p]circumstance. The Lord be with you all!

¹⁷ ^[q]I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. ¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

Paul finishes this letter by wanting the peace of God be in them at all times and in every way. I love this piece of Scripture from Jesus in John 14: 27, "I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn't like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid. (NLT)" God's peace isn't like world peace because God's peace calms our heart and mind to continue to carry on during our suffering and trials. God's peace helps us to keep moving while holding on to our faith. God's peace let's us know He is there holding our hand while holding the other end of the rope. God's peace let's us know we are on good solid ground when the wind and rain is upon us. Paul states this in Philippians 4: 6-7, "Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (NLT)" God's peace will guard our hearts and minds. This is so important. This peace tells us to move on when we are afraid to move on. This peace tells us to move on when we think we can't move on. This peace tells us things will be ok when our human mind wants to think otherwise. God's peace renews our mind to give it peace to handle any type of situation. God's peace tells us we must move on because being idle is not an option for a follower of Jesus. The peace of God gives us a different mind set to handle and to see things in His light and understanding. I wonder if this peace is what kept Abraham Lincoln going during those troubled times he had to face as a President and as a father. Maybe he was like those mountain climbers who didn't focus on the spike or the fall, but focused on the view that non-mountain climbers will never get to enjoy in person. We must keep going while holding on. Let's not become idle. So much to do before Jesus comes back again.

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996.