

Holding On

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” (John 10:28)

Recently my sister came down from the Bay Area to visit for a weekend. Among the usual activities of shopping and eating, we decided to visit the LA County Fair. I’ve always been fascinated by fair food; how do they come up with such combinations as deep fried Snicker bars, Krispy Kreme chicken sandwiches and chocolate bacon? Of course our stomachs couldn’t handle all the intriguing options so we chose our food judiciously so as to enjoy rather than to engorge.

Early into our outing we decided to take a ride on the “Sky Tram,” a contraption something akin to a ski lift. Looking up from the ground we saw people carried stories overhead aboard what looked like moving benches hanging from a clothesline. We too could get a birds eye view of the activities below and best decide how to manage the few hours available to us at the Fairplex.

Feeling secure on the ground we entered the gate to board the ride. Then we were directed to a platform and the area of the launching pad where we stood briefly until the next available seat arrived. When the next empty bench touched the back of our legs, we immediately sat down and a rather flimsy security bar was positioned in our laps. Accompanied by the growls of the large motor works nearby, the bench dipped and rocked in response to its new load; then it lurched forward and carried us skyward. Within moments we were dangling aboard the moving clothesline at its maximum elevation, about 6 or 7 stories above the park.

At first we made light banter like, “look at the trains down there” and so forth. But this was just a cover, for it dawned on me how helpless and out of control I felt. It wasn’t as if we were traveling at breakneck speed; we probably moved no faster than 4 or 5 mph. Still, this scrawny little bar in my lap seemed painfully inadequate to keep me in the seat; furthermore was this contraption really that secure? How tight were the fittings fastened on this temporary ride that would be taken down in a few weeks, and how extensive was its preventative maintenance program and routine safety checks? I hadn’t asked these questions on the ground yet nonetheless had placed my confidence in this ride the moment I sat in the seat. At that point I was committed. So I held on and kept chatting, all the while hoping the whole thing would be over soon...without making the 6 o’clock news.

The truth was, no matter how hard I gripped that flimsy bar it made no difference in how safe I was aboard the Sky Tram. But guess what? Even if I experienced no trace of nerves and thoroughly enjoyed the ride without holding fast, I’d be no safer then either. Once I committed to that seat by sitting in it, my fate was out of my hands, barring anything foolish on my part like standing up in mid-air. So ultimately the security of that ride had nothing to do with my strength to hold onto it but everything to do with its strength to hold me up.

This uncomfortable physical experience illustrated to me a comforting spiritual truth about our eternal security; it doesn’t depend on how hard we hold onto God, but how hard He holds onto us. When we’ve entrusted our eternal destiny to Jesus Christ, having accepted Him as Savior for the forgiveness of our sins, we’ve become His. Kind of like the moment I sat in the Sky Tram’s seat and entrusted myself to it. But in contrast to any man-made ride, the hand of Jesus Christ is safe and secure; He promises that nothing can pluck us away from Him (John 10:28-29). This is guaranteed by Almighty, unfailing God who cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). So even though He’s got the whole world in His hands, He also holds us in them as well.

Still it’s not always easy for me to accept things outside my control; a few minutes on a rickety ride at the fair made that abundantly clear. However, regardless of whether or not I feel out of control, God is always in control; He’s the one who keeps my heart beating, supplies my daily bread and shelters me from harm. His grace is so abundant, I’m guilty of taking it for granted until I realize at certain times, such as when dangling 60 feet in the air, how helpless I can feel and how fast.

Though physical survival is uncertain at any moment, eternal survival is promised by God. In spite of a world fraught with earthly risks, He guarantees 100% to hold onto us and to deliver us safely into His presence.