Coronavirus Social Distancing Daily Devotion #45

Suffering

**Hebrews 12:4 (NASB) “***You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.”*

There are many things in this life that challenge us greatly. This pandemic has been something that fits well into that category. People from all over the world have been forced to change their lifestyles and make major changes in the way they move around and interact with others. Some have had to make changes to their living situations. Many have lost their jobs creating great anxiety for how they will provide for their families. We have had specific stipulations passed down to us by the authorities and that varies depending on where you live. And the list of struggles goes on. It has been a difficult time for many. But by far, the most challenging thing we have had to face is the uncertainty of whether we will contract the virus. That uncertainty has caused many people to take extreme measures and look to others to do the same. This subject is never ending in our minds and our conversations. It has affected everything we do in some way.

Some would call this suffering, and it certainly is suffering in the sense that it is different from what we have had to experience before. But suffering is relative. What you and I would consider suffering is not what other people across the world would consider suffering. And what the world considers suffering is not necessary what the Lord considers suffering.

According to the writer to the Hebrews, suffering is based our what we go through for God. That is not to say that people are not truly suffering in the world and undergoing extreme suffering in many cases. But most of the suffering people endure comes from what they are not able to have or able to do either for themselves or for their families. And again, that is real suffering and all who suffer should be helped any way they can and by whomever they can. But the Lord’s definition of suffering, real suffering, is when we are in positions of great difficulty because of Him or for His sake.

The writer of Hebrews is writing to Hebrews who are in one of three camps.

1. Those who have fully embraced Christ as Lord and Savior,
2. Those who are in between fully embracing Christ and holding to their Hebrew roots and traditions.
3. Those who have denied their biblical teachings and are not living for the Lord fully.

The point of the passage is not that those who have followed Christ are not suffering but that they have not undergone the extreme test of faithfulness to Christ. They have not suffered to the point of death. Those who suffer to the point of death are those who see the wickedness of their sin and follow Christ even if it means they lose their lives because of it.

Suffering for Jesus is not because we haven’t been able to meet as a church like normal. Suffering is not that we can’t get our internet to work so we can have church together. Suffering is not that we can’t get together for fellowship meals. While all those things are important and necessary and frustrating, real suffering comes when we are forced to deny Christ, yet live for Him anyway. Today, and for centuries, there have been such followers of Christ. Men and women, young and old, who have loved Jesus so much, they have given their lives for Him.

Are you willing to suffer that way? Are you willing to acknowledge that real suffering is godly suffering? The kind of suffering that comes when you see your sin and loath it so much that you want only Christ and His ability to cleanse you of its deathly power. Suffering because you are willing to give up your life because He has done such marvelous cleansing? When life gets to that point, that is real suffering.

Beloved, we have a lot for which to be thankful. I pray God never calls us to such suffering. But if He does, may our hearts be ready.