Devotion #281

**Keep Going**

**2 Corinthians 4:8 (NASB)**  *“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing.”*

“Things are not going to get easier”. I’m sure you get tired of hearing that from me, but the truth is that life will not get easier. There will be times when life is less stressful and less demanding, but for the most part life will continue on a downward spiral. Now before I sound too negative and give the impression that there is no hope, I want to assure you that those who are in Christ have much to look forward to.

While we have to wait until the day we are in heaven, we must endure challenges in this life. We are certainly seeing changes in our world. I know there are many terrible things that have happened over the years all over the world, but in our country at least we have been somewhat insulated from the work of Satan, at least in a blatant way, but that is changing. What people have experienced for years across the world, we are starting to experience here on a somewhat regular basis. We could argue that it is due to the increase in media attention and maybe even say these evil things have happened just as much as they do now, but we never heard about them. Maybe all that is true, but the Lord did tell us things will get worse before they get better. **Matthew 10:21-22 (NASB)** *"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved*.”

Jesus is not saying that those who persevere will be saved for that reason. No, salvation has always been by faith alone. (Ephesians 2:8-9) The Lord is speaking of perseverance even though there will come many trials and difficulties because we follow Him. This is what Paul is talking about. Paul was often accused of misleading people, and as a result was physically assaulted many times. But he endured it all. How? What was it that made him continue his life of difficulty. It’s more simple than you might think. He understood that it was not he who people hated, but Jesus. The attacks against him were the result of a world that had rejected God. So when Paul proclaimed Christ as the only way of salvation, they hated him, but they hated him because they hated Jesus.

And the world will do the same with us. They will hate God and take it out on us. (John 15:18-21)That is why Paul could continue. Paul could see that his suffering was actually a witness of his relationship with Jesus. And from that, he gained strength. Unfortunately, most people take it personally when they are attacked for being a follower of Christ. And that is easy to do. After all, the attack is directed at us. But we must remember the real issue and the real enemy. This life is a battle between God and Satan. God loves us but Satan wants to destroy us, because he wants to get to God. Paul knew that. He understood the warfare that was occurring in the spiritual realm. (Ephesians 6:12)

So what are we to do when the world gets darker and more evil? We do what we have always done. We keep going. We get up every morning and pray for the Holy Spirit to use us as faithful witnesses and take all the opportunities that are presented to us to be a reflection of Jesus - all the while understanding that we will be attacked. Maybe not physically, but generally, at least at this point, we will be pushed down more and more. In this we are to take heart because that is how they treated our Lord which makes us identifiable with Him. What could be better than being known as a true follower of Jesus? Even if that means we suffer for it.

Don’t despair as you read the headlines. God is still in control and fully able to bring us to be with Him, even if we leave this world in some way we would not choose for ourselves. That is not the issue. The issue is, are we willing to keep going, no matter what the Lord’s will is for us, simply because we belong to Him?