

Paul's Persecuted Preaching
By Trey Sullins

“For your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Romans 8:36). These haunting words are quoted by Paul in reference to the suffering that will be endured by those faithful to God. Paul was a man who withstood an incredible amount of persecution for his life of service to God. In 2 Corinthians 4:8 he gives a great encouragement about how we can continue on through our persecutions in life. By looking at his great example we can pattern ourselves to stand against the tribulations that will come our way.

“We are hard pressed on every side” (2 Corinthians 4:8). No matter where the righteous person looks often times the struggles seem to come from every side. A great description of this is found in 2 Corinthians 7:5. Here Paul expresses how they were facing conflicts from outside and fear inside, but even in this, God comforted them. 2 Corinthians 4:8 continues by saying, “yet not crushed.” Sometimes we might feel like a rock being pressed by the earth around it on all sides. However, even with all this pressure on us we will not be crushed with the Almighty strengthening us. Many times, this great oppression will perplex us, as verse 8 continues. The word “perplexed” means to be in doubt or stand at a loss. It is a great wonder why the world so greatly enjoys mistreating those who are in God. Again, even though this stressful contemplation may be great, we, the workers of God, are not in despair because the Lord is on our side.

“Persecuted, but not forsaken” (2 Corinthians 4:9). The Holy Spirit here directly deals with persecutions now. The word “persecuted” has connotations of making someone flee or pursuing someone with hostile intent (Strong's). If anyone understood this, it would definitely be Paul. As he travelled around on his missionary journeys, there was often a group of Jews following him and trying to harm him (Acts 17:3, Acts 21:27). In Acts 14:19 the Jews from Antioch and Iconium caught up with Paul, stirred up a crowd and stoned him to death, or so they thought. Still, Paul was not forsaken because the brethren gathered around him and God was on His side; therefore, he rose and went on to the next city. God will never forsake us either as Hebrews 13:5 declares! Verse 9 also says “struck down, but not destroyed.” Paul was quite literally struck down but rose up undestroyed to continue his mission for God! This powerful example shows us that we can strive to continue on in the face of our persecutions as well.

Although persecution is itself bad, persecution yields some good results which Paul reveals. Second Corinthians 4:10-12 says, “always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” The great benefit of persecution is that even though their bodies were experiencing the same things that put Jesus on the cross—persecution—they were manifesting Jesus Christ in their actions. This same benefit can be seen in us when we endure the trials of life. Imagine living like some of those in the first century church; everyday you would have a fear of this being your last day of freedom or life simply because of your faith in God. Thankfully, we do not face those kinds of struggles today, but our sacrifices and persecutions still manifest Christ in a powerful way.

Ultimately, we are all going to face persecution. Second Timothy 3:12 offers this guarantee: “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” However, when we live

for God no matter what comes our way, then the world will see example, and many will come to Christ!