**2017 8 13 *"THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK"***

***“When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate”***

Beloved in our Lord,

There is no greater calling that that of the Christian; there is no greater power than that of a Christian; indeed, there is no greater glory than that of being a Christian. If we dig deep into what St. Paul is saying in this epistle, we will see that it is the exact opposite of what the world preaches. If we are to live the Christian life we must reject and leave behind all of these worldly approaches and base our life on what St. Paul has told us.

First, the world teaches us that when we are reviled, we must defend our honor, we must attack back for the best defense is an offense, or we must flee from this person for he or she is not worth the effort. St. Paul tells us to bless them, that is to pray for them, to love them, to make excuses for them, and to forgive them.

Second, the world teaches us that when we are persecuted, we should compromise to avoid any pain. In the present time persecution comes in the form of a vilification of all of our whole value system. If we hold to a traditional view of marriage we are called intolerant. If we say a prayer before a meal or insist that our kids go to church on Sundays, instead of soccer or hockey, we are called rigid and controlling. If we fast and pray, we are called backwards and superstitious. St. Paul simply says we must not compromise any element of our Christian lives. We must not live our lives to please men but only to please God. To put it simply we must endure, for the glory that is ours, the world will never experience.

Third, when we are slandered, the world tells us to prove ourselves honorable and in doing so, prove that the person who slanders us is a scoundrel. St. Paul tells us that the source of all slander is the devil. He wishes to divide us. So, instead of taking the bait of the evil one, we conciliate. We say a kind word to dissipate, rather than fuel any kind of division.

Finally my beloved in Christ Jesus, we can see that what St. Paul is really telling us is that we must preserve love at all costs. This is the only solution to all of our problems. It is the only way we can be free. And this Love that we are preserving is the Christ that lives deep in our hearts. It is only through His living presence in us that we can do anything good; all else is tainted with our fallen human pride. It is only through a deep desire to please him that we can find peace. It is only through being crucified with Him that we will be glorified. This is our calling, our power, and our glory as those who love Christ. Amen.