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La D 389 preached by Mr. J. Delves at Richmond on Friday evening
31.3.72

Hymns: 228, 344, 633

Reading: Romans 8 (from v. 14)

Text: Romans 8. 35

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"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

The Apostle appears to enter into this chapter after an intense conflict of mind through which he had been passing. So heavily had it wrought upon him that he said, "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But he proved that there was one who could deliver him; and this he appears to have been brought into in a very blessed way, so as to feel that for him there was no condemnation. In the second verse of this chapter he says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The first verse applies to all the Lord's people, the second verse is his own experience of what the Gospel had done for him.

It is a great thing when we can feel what the Gospel has done for us personally. It is a wonderful thing for a poor guilty sinner to come to such a place as this, to feel that he is completely delivered from all opposing powers that condemn him and bring him into bondage. There is no liberty so sweet as the liberty of the blessed Gospel. Then, as he proceeds, he seems to be full of these blessings, so much so that he can say, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" and "All things work together for good to them that love God". God will fulfil His purposes. What He begins He will complete, and all those that were in His eternal decrees foreknown, predestinated, justified, glorified, will one day be in glory with Him where He is.

I have been speaking a little this afternoon in verse 34 where the Apostle declares what the Gospel does for all who truly believe, for every vessel of mercy. It will carry them beyond and deliver them from all that would condemn them, for they are so to speak out of their reach altogether. In fact no creature can determine the eternal destiny of another; this is in the hands of

death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The love of God to His people is in and through His beloved Son, it centres there, and every manifestation of it is through His beloved Son. It is not a different kind of love, the love of the blessed Trinity is the same love, the love of the Father to the Son is the same love: the Lord Himself says, "The love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them". Nothing can separate the love of Christ from us, that is His people, nothing can separate that sacred bond. People may take up a profession of religion and drop it, and go back into the world again, but that bears its own sad evidence, this does not indicate that the bond of love in Christ to His people is severed; nothing can sever this. Everyone that was given to Him will one day be with Him, this is in the prayer of the Lord Jesus, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world".

"Shall tribulation?", says the Apostle, will that separate us from the love of Christ? This has been the experience of all the Lord's people more or less through the ages of time, is not this the Lord's legacy, "In the world ye shall have tribulation"; and so they have and will in various ways while they are down here. The Apostle records this in Acts 14, "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God". I believe the Apostle here really refers to what the Lord's people suffer for His name's sake in a particular way. Tribulation is not just merely trouble which is common to all mankind, but rather those particular trials that are peculiar to His dear people in things through which they have to pass and suffer for His dear name's sake. Shall tribulation separate us? Is it not often when we are in some tribulation that we have the sweetest experience of that love? Has not the furnace often been sweetened by His

presence in some path of tribulation? "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee". Did tribulation cause the blessed Redeemer to separate us from His love? God forbid. I know we cannot draw a definite line; yet sometimes the Lord's people have the sweetest communion with their Lord when they have the bitterest cup to drink. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress". Distress - In the days of the Apostles, especially Peter and Paul who refer to it, these fellow believers were scattered abroad, driven out of their homes; and the Apostle Paul records that they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Distressing circumstances did not separate from Christ's love to them.

I cannot enter into all the conditions referred to now, but would notice the Apostle's concluding words for they are very convincing, "For I am persuaded", as though he would say, I am at a point about it, I am convinced, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Shall death separate us from His love? Is not death, in the case of the Lord's dear people, that separation of the soul from the body when the ransomed spirit enters into the full enjoyment of love? Death cannot separate us. Our mortal body is the Lord's property; He will come again one day and redeem it for it is the purchased possession.

Between the services, sitting in the vestry, I have been looking back a little, and it is well over 42 years ago when I first came to preach here, and I have been more or less in contact with you ever since those days; but I was thinking of one and another whom I knew and loved; and where are they now? They are before the throne of God, where they see Him as He is. And has their death separated Christ's love from them? God, forbid; it

has brought them into the full enjoyment of it, their cup is full. Death cannot separate from the love of Christ. Quite a number, as I look back, are gone from earth to heaven. As to their ransomed spirits, death cannot separate them. "I am persuaded". I like this so much, "I am persuaded" - that is in this sense, I am convinced that nothing shall be able to separate us. In chapter 4 the Apostle refers to Abraham saying of him, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully persuaded". That is a blessed point to be brought to - "fully persuaded that what the Lord had promised He was able also to perform". He was fully persuaded. So in Hebrews 11 it is recorded of those witnesses that they all died in faith, not having received the promises, - that is the fulfilment of them in the coming of the Messiah, - but having seen them far off were persuaded of them and embraced them. They saw the fulfilment of the promises by faith, so real, that they embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. I close with what good old Berridge says, "Living tongues are dumb at best, I must die to speak of Christ". Amen.