

147

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Wednesday evening 22 April 1925

Romans 8 v 35

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ;  
shall tribulation or distress or persecution  
or famine or nakedness or peril or sword"

This blessed chapter distinctly brings before us eternal realities, time things, distinguishing evidences of the life of God, the marks of the true children of God and the end of all the troubles of the saints of God. If we are born again, there will be times when this chapter will have a peculiar attraction to us, when its contents will appear to us to be full of everything that we can wish, when we shall find ourselves, as our desire is, on the right side. As the Apostle distinctly shows us in the earlier verses of the chapter, that spiritually minded people mind the things of the Spirit, and carnally minded people mind carnal things. And this distinction is very searching, but when the searching is over and the testimony of the Spirit and of the conscience will bring you on the right side, you will thank God for the searching. Am I spiritually minded? It may not be manifested so much by what I say as by the working of my mind, the direction and the trend of my spirit, and the objects of my desire and pursuit. Not what you say, but what you are, will decide the point. Not the profession you make before men, but the state of your mind in the sight of God. Whether in His sight His things are uppermost in your mind. Whether you choose inly to be His. Choose His things. Choose, with Mary, to sit at the feet of Jesus to learn of Him to choose the better part which, given by God, shall never be taken away by men, by devil, by time, by death. To be spiritually minded is evidenced by minding spiritual things. Nature goes after its own kind. The carnal mind goes after its kind, and the spiritual mind goes after its kind. Born of the Spirit you cannot live upon earthly things. Born for eternal blessings, you cannot subsist on time things. God and God alone will be the great object of your desires. This is manifested in this chapter, distinctly taught in this chapter. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus flowing

52  
315

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L P 812

forth from Him into our souls, if it be so, will free us from the law of sin and death. Not from the being of sin, not from the feeling of death, but from the law of sin, the rule, the dominion, the authority of it. You are the servant of the person to whom you yield obedience. "Know ye not" says the Spirit in this Epistle, "that his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness". You cannot serve God and Mammon. You will hate the one and love the other. You cannot serve them both because they are so dissimilar, so contrary, each to the other and their laws and their commandments are so different. They go in different directions because they are of different natures. So that if you serve mammon you cannot also serve God. If you serve God you cannot also serve mammon. You will be troubled, plagued every morning and that Scripture which is so solemn and searching will be somewhat realised in you and by you - "We are killed all the day long". "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long". And, says the Apostle "I die daily". There is a daily death where there is a daily life moving. Where the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is, there will be a daily dying because this law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus will take you into an entirely different direction, move you, urge you, help you, testify in you of the things that are of God. Timeless things will be the aim and the object of your desire and your pursuit, and then the flesh, being strong and determined not to give way or to die, will oppose this and in this way and sense, in some measure, you will die daily, be killed all the day long. Faith in exercise is the death of sin, death of the old man. Faith in exercise makes the things of God best, beautiful, pure, holy and alone desirable. What a mercy it is to be exercised as the Apostle here speaks in this blessed chapter, for it is a blessed chapter, and it follows the seventh. They are connected. When the autograph was written Paul did not write chapter 1 and 2 and so on into 16 chapters. He wrote a scroll, and the modern division of the Epistles and the whole of the Scripture into chapters is very convenient, but it is not in every case absolutely wise. The seventh chapter and the eighth chapter are indeed one, one wonderful piece of inspired writing. The Apostle at the end of the seventh chapter tells that he triumphs in Christ. His exercise under and by, and his conflict with, sin troubled him, made him feel a wretched man and enquire who should deliver him from the body of this death. Then the Spirit helped him and he said "I thank God through Jesus

Christ our Lord". So then I myself, I the Apostle Paul, a gracious man, I myself serve the law of God but with the flesh, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, the law of sin. Then he says "Therefore there is no condemnation." There is trouble, killing, dying, pains, pains of death, pains of birth, pains of exercise. There is all this but no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. And then he goes on to show how that this new creation groans and yet, in the midst of groaning, has expectation; looking for redemption in Jerusalem; waiting for the Lord's coming; and how that the indwelling of the Spirit moves and enables those in whom He dwells to this gracious exercise. And then he comes, as you know, to this wonderful part of this chapter, where he says, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose". Now "all things" embrace providential troubles, exercises, ins and outs, deaths, afflictions Every sort and kind of thing that God may send in providence you will find included in the "all things". And then, included in the "all things" also you have the things which have preceded in the chapter. The exercises, the trend and movement of the Spirit after God and His things; spirituality of mind. These things all together do work for good. They move us after God and that is good. They separate us from the world, and that is good. They tell us that this time's state is a short one, though a painful one, and that is good. And they testify that eternity is a blessed state for the saints, and that is good and works for good. Also the Spirit witnessing with the spirits of the children of God, witnessing to their relationship to their heavenly Father and to their Elder Brother, showing that they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. All these things welded together, so to speak, in the experience of the saints, work for their good, alienate them from this life, unite them to Christ, who is their eternal life. Well, then the Apostle speaks of predestination. Why should not we? I think it is a mark of the decay of the power of truth wherever there is any shyness with respect to the grand doctrine of divine sovereignty. We speak of them as the doctrines of grace. We have in them the doctrine of eternal predestination, the foreknowledge of God with respect to those whom He predestinated. It is declared "And whom He did predestinate them He also called and whom He called them He also justified, and whom He justified them He also glorified." And all this was to this great end, that the people thus

spoken of and to, are to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Now in the Philippians the Apostle tells us how earnestly he desired to apprehend that for which he was apprehended of Christ. Why Christ called Him, why Christ laid His hand of invincible grace on him, Saul of Tarsus, an injurious person, persecuting the Church of God and wasting it. This was what he asked to know, as if he should say, Lord, Thou hast a reason for calling me by grace. Show me that reason, that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus. And is not this it, that we may be conformed to the image of God's dear Son, and attain to the resurrection of the just when all the saints of the Most High shall be gathered together and brought unto God the Father by Him who is their Head and Life, saying "Behold I and the children whom Thou hast given Me", and so fulfilling that word by John, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." All these things are in this chapter my friends. Every Word of God is pure from Genesis to Revelation. Some parts of the Word the Lord made particularly rich as in the Epistle to the Ephesians you have the most profound teaching, the wondrous eternal blessedness of the saints in heavenly places in Christ. And in this Epistle you have the great doctrine of justification by Jesus Christ, by His righteousness and in this chapter you have the things which I have just briefly hinted at and they are worthy of all the attention, the spiritual attention, that God may enable us to give them; all the meditation we may have grace to exercise with regard to them. And I would say brethren, may the Lord open to you and to me more and more distinctly, graciously and powerfully, this wonderful, blessed chapter. And after having said these things he says - what shall we say to them? "What shall we then say to these things." Gathering them all up as it were and placing them before the people, the Christians at Rome, he says - what shall we say to them? Ask the pharisee, the worlding, the infidel, the man who denies the Deity of Jesus Christ, what they think of these things and they condemn them and speak contemptuously of them. Ask the exercised people of God what they think, and they will say, they are beautiful. They may say - we are not sure of an interest in them, we wish we were interested in them, but they can say, sometimes, we have not enmity actively working against them. They are so attractive and beautiful. O if we only were wrapped up in those things. What shall we say? They are blessed things, desirable things, saving mercies, covenant

blessings such as the soul longs for, meat that it loves. "If God be for us". If He be for us in the Covenant, if He be for us as He said: "A new Covenant will I make with them after those days. I will put My laws into their mind and in their heart will I write them and they shall be to Me a people and I will be to them a God", what shall we say to this. O, if God be for us, who, what, what man, what devil, what circumstances can effectually work against us. Enemies we must have; effectual, victorious enemies we cannot have if God be for us. Sin, our worst, our most painful enemy cannot effectually overcome us. We may get under the foot of all these enemies, but they will never overcome us finally.

Then he asks a question beautifully. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Two parties will lay many things against you, against me; they do against me. The first is conscience. Perhaps some of you say, I have done wrong today; I have been careless, worldly, wrapped up in some vanity. I have minded some things that I knew at the moment I was minding them could not profit me. And the other is the accuser of the brethren. He will come, he will speak against you, he will set before you things that you know to be true - carnality of mind, covetousness, worldliness, lust and vanity. He will set them all before you and you say I know it is too true; I have minded those things. Ah, but the blood of Christ appears - "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Therefore "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" You come to the bar, you plead guilty, you have nothing to say in extenuation, you cannot excuse yourself at all. What then? You do not justify yourself. What a dreadful thing it is for a person to justify himself, to brow-beat his conscience, to stamp under his foot conviction, and justify himself and throw the blame on the Almighty. That man, so dying, will never see God with joy. Joshua had no excuse. He appears to have been dumb when clothed with filthy garments, but then this comes in "It is God that justifieth". I would not for the world be left to self-justification. "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" Where is the man who can bring a just charge against him who is justified by God. "It is God that justifieth". His sentence is just, His sentence can never be reversed, never be proved to be other than right. "It is God that

justifieth". Ah, if we, in God's court, if we, with our consciences against us, come guilty, weak, self-condemned, if conscience ratifies the awful sentence and you say, if I am sent to hell; I must justify God there in the severest sentence of His law and in the terrible execution of the sentence, I must justify Him - "It is God that justifieth." Yes sinner, when you have nothing to say but "guilty", when you are justifying God and condemning yourself, then you are chastened of the Lord, and the day will come when you will be acquitted. "It is God that justifieth". "It is Christ that died", and so answers all questions, meets all demands, pays all debts, washes away all sin, "yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.". Now here is a ground then for the question of my text. It is always good to have ground for assertion or for questions. This being the case with us - "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ" who died for us, who is risen again, who is at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. You see, I hope you do, the good ground that we have to stand on with regard to this question. It is as if, I may say, the whole of the chapter preceding, the whole of the Epistle that has gone before, is the ground on which the Apostle stands, and asks by inspiration, this question and on which, every child of God led into it by the Spirit and blessed with the witness of the Spirit, also stands. Who shall separate me? You take one word in the Prophets, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against Him". That is true; that is a blessed language, a gracious experience. Then; till when? "Until He plead my cause". Who is like unto the God of Jacob who executeth mercy and righteousness. Ezra, before the Lord in his trespass, said "Thou art righteous and we are escaped." That is the point. "Thou art righteous". The law has been satisfied; God has been magnified in His law; Christ has honoured His Father, obeyed Him, walked in His commandments and fulfilled them, and He died in fulfilling the commandments. "That is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God". Who then shall separate us? Christ must have His own, He must enjoy His purchase. "Feed the church of God which He purchased with His own blood". He must enjoy that purchase; it is His property, it is His right. "Who shall separate us?" The Father has a claim; these are My children. How shall I put thee among the children and give thee a goodly land, a heritage, a pleasant land and a heritage among the hosts of the

nations. Thou shalt call Me my Father. That is the answer. God answers His own question. Thou shalt call Me my Father and to their wicked persons He says "Wilt not thou from this time cry, 'Thou art my Father, the guide of my youth.'" Then He must have His claim. He has it, He maintains it. And the Spirit has His claim. (1 Corinthians 3 v 16) for He has come to this people and made them His temple, and given them the life of Christ and is the law of the life of Christ in their souls. So the Trinity has a claim on these people and who then shall separate them? The ground is good my friends and good for us if we are brought to it.

"The love of Christ". Christ is God, God is love, so who shall separate us from God? Who shall separate from God? You cannot separate Christ and His love, for God is love. Who then shall separate one who is united to Him? The love of Christ is eternal. The love of Christ is eternal. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee". No change, no time, no provocation, no removal, all eternally settled. The love of God is that that the Apostle here speaks about. He asks the question - who shall wrench an elected person, a regenerated person, one in whom the Spirit of God dwells, who shall separate him from that love that gave him his good estate, that knows no time, that can never be offended with us as to turn away from the objects of it because of sin? Taking in, with one view, if I may so say, all that these loved ones should be in the fall, all that they should do as sinners, all that they should deserve as law breakers, taking all that in, He says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". "Who then shall separate" The love of the Father, the love of the Son and the love of the Holy Ghost is one love, but as it is in each Person in the covenant of grace, each Person having His own peculiar part in that covenant, this is the three-fold cord that cannot be broken.

"If once the love of Christ we feel  
Upon our hearts impressed  
The mark of that celestial seal  
Can never be erased"

And you may say I have lost the mark. No. I have before quoted Charnock on this point and I will do it again. He says - letters may

be deeply engraved in brass, they may be left, they may be so filled up with dirt and dust as to be obliterated to the view. They exist but they are not seen. What is required? Only a brush to remove the dust. That is the substance of a very weighty remark that he has to make on the engraving. Now if the love of Christ has been impressed on you, that has made a mark, a celestial mark, and neither sin, for which everyone who commits it will suffer in his conscience, neither sin, nor devil, nor trouble, nor unbelief, shall ever erase. Cover over and fill up, so that the letters, the impression shall not be visible for a time, that may be, but the removal, the obliteration, no, never. The love of Christ was a self-emptying, humbling love. "He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men" and humbled Himself to death even the death of the cross. What a love was this. It brought Him from the throne to the cross and the grave. He made Himself of no reputation, was found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, appeared to be a poor man, and was a poor man; weak, was crucified through weakness. But what brought all this to pass was His eternal love. "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly". Who shall separate from this, this self-emptying, humbling love? This God, so humble is His love that He comes down from heaven with all its glories, leaves angels adoring Him, assumes our nature, is found in the form of a servant and is heard saying to His Father "I delight to do Thy will, O My God." So humble is the love of this blessed God that He undertook and He went through. Who shall separate us from this? Will He give up the objects for which He suffered so much? Will He abandon them to their enemy? Will He let their sins overcome them? Why, He died to put away their sins. Will He permit their corruptions to overcome them? Why, He died to be their holiness, their sanctification and gives them His good Spirit to sanctify them. Therefore who shall separate us from this humble love and humbling love of the Lord of life and glory?

And it is a tender love, a love that will show all its tenderness to every object of it in different ways from time to time

"He, to the feeble and the faint,  
His mighty aid makes known



To the helpless He becomes a helper. To the poor He becomes riches. To the dead He becomes life. To the guilty He becomes righteousness. To the filthy He becomes holiness, thus, meeting every condition, every experience and every place and pain of His people. How are they to be snatched away from His love. Who shall separate? Who shall cut the union that is between a living Saviour and a loved sinner? Who shall make a sinner, eternally loved, the object of divine hatred? Has the Lord Jesus shown pity to you? Will His pity dry because you sometimes sin? O He is a gracious Lord. The Apostle did not ask the question out of any doubt, but rather asks it in a way of demonstration, as if he should say, having done all this, can there come anything of separation between Him and the people for whom He did it? It is a demonstration my friends that this tender love of the Lord Jesus shall never let go its hold of one favoured object of it. Then too, it is, shall I say, a visiting love. He visits sinners, and if He has paid you a visit, will He go for ever and never never come again? He says for a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with everlasting mercies will I visit thee. I will come again; I will come again. His own promise is that - "I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice". He undoes the work of sin; He tramples under foot Satan, destroying him that had the power of death, even the devil, to deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. And what a favour it is to get a visit from this Lord, to get your hearts softened and enlarged and your conscience purified and pacified. To get your desires answered, so that they become a tree of life to you and swallow up all the trouble of a deferred hope, all the sickness that you felt. He visits sinners still. He visits them in His own ways and at His own appointed times, and the things that may suggest a separation, that might say He is gone, will only prove the contrary. For when you say "My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment passed over from my God", He may say, and will, in substance, "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, hath it not been told thee, that God, the everlasting Lord fainteth not neither is weary. There is no searching of His understanding". He calls the stars by their names and because that He is strong in power, not one of them faileth. The youths faint and are weary, the young men utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. He visits them in His Word. He speaks to them. He speaks to them and His Word brings them. He comes in it. He speaks to

them in their troubles. He visits them in the dungeon. In the day when they were crying to Him in the low dungeon, He spoke and said "Fear not". Yea He opens the prison house and says to the prisoner, "come forth". And it is a patient love, a patient love. It is indeed solemnly and sweetly true, His love bears so much. Many waters of ingratitude cannot quench it. He comes again and again and shows you that He has borne with your ill-manners and stiff-necked ways, and calls you His own, notwithstanding. How good the Lord is then to embrace His people in a love that shall never let go its hold of them, but bless them, and comfort them, and lift them up again and again, taking them from off the dust of the dunghill and setting them with princes, even the princes of His people and making them inherit the throne of glory. "Who shall separate us?" Will nobody try? Who hath resisted His will? Will no one try to do it? O yes, the old man tries. Ishmael in your heart tries to do it. The devil tries to do it. Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, threatenings, evil of every sort may come, and these may seem as if they were about to succeed sometimes, but they will never effect their awful design. Shall tribulation? Why, that does good; it worketh patience. There is a separation of the chaff from the wheat as the Lord says. There is a separation; the flail gives you pain, but it brings profit. The threshing machine threatens every sort of death, but it brings only good. It takes away all that can be spared. The furnace is there and the silver is put into the crucible, but the Refiner is there too. He sitteth as a Refiner and purifier of silver. He is there, no separation, He is there. I will be with you He says. When thou passest through the waters, when thou walkest through the fire, I am there. I am the Lord thy Maker, thy husband who cares and takes care of all His people; no separation. He is in the covenant with them. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee", but this is My covenant "My kindness shall not depart from thee". I will be their God; I will remember their sins no more. Never bring them up again against them in judgment. I will remember their sins no more.

So the people of God have every reason to lift up their heads because their salvation draweth nigh. They wait with earnest expectation sometimes, for the redemption and the glorious liberty of the children of God, and the Lord has assured them of this, "I will

never leave thee, nor forsake thee". Who shall do it? Your circumstances? They may be very threatening, but they will never kill you. The life of God shall never never die. "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish." We must expect trouble. "In the world ye shall have tribulation". It is Christ's promise connected with the peace. Ye shall have it. Therefore we must look for it. If we do not, we are not wise. But though it should come, it shall not come to cut the union. It shall come to separate the chaff from the wheat. And that seems like doing all, that seems like destruction, but it is not so. Will the devil be able to do it? No, he plagues, but he cannot kill. He wearies, he pursues, he distresses, he distracts, he tempts, he stirs up corruption, he makes it boil sometimes in you and your nature is not averse, but this is not separation. God knows the grief and pain and shame His people feel when they are in such circumstances, but it is not separation from Christ. "No separation" is a grand thing, and when the Holy Ghost makes it out to a sinner, then he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And as to this accuser of the brethren, why he is cast down and he will be cast down from every person whom he tempts and troubles in the church of the living God. Now my friends, do you know a little of this love? You are not to measure the love by what little you know of it. It is eternal, unalterable. It is in the covenant, it is in the Person, the heart, of Christ and its forth-flowings are according to the dispensations of the Spirit given to every man to profit withal.

May the Lord make it out to us. May He show it to us. As John tells us, a river of water of life was showed to him, so may the Spirit show to us this blessed, eternal love of Christ.

AMEN.