

Nothing shall separate us

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[0 : 0 0] I'd like to thank your minister for his very kind words of welcome and pray that God will be with us as a congregation here tonight and that we might have the both felt and known presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There have been over the years many contacts between this congregation and mine not on a very well known scale but many of our people have come here and worship with you and feel very much part of you here and they have decided this week to hold a week of prayer that they might be supportive in the ministry that we might be as one and I think that is a very wonderful thing to happen.

I bring the greetings of the church and although it is an English language church there are many Welsh people there so perhaps if I can just say one sentence as a greeting.

Gras ein harglwyd jesu grist bwydag gydachwyd. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. I shall now read from the scriptures from the epistle to the Romans verse 8 chapter 8 and beginning at verse 28 and reading to the end of that chapter.

That's Romans chapter 8 verse 28 to the end. My text is in the epistle to the Romans and the 8th chapter and verse 38 but particularly I'd like to bring your attention to one phrase although I'd like us to look at a number of the verses that are there in the context.

[1 : 5 8] But the phrase that I found to be a very telling one. These four words. For I am persuaded.

That's verse 38 in the 8th chapter of Romans. For I am persuaded. It's a great thing to be able to say just that.

I think if I had to describe the generation and the age that you and I are living in, I suppose that there would be many ways that you and I would say well I think this is the emphasis that I would make and you perhaps would make another and talk about the anxieties of wars, of the economic situation, and the various problems that we have in plenty today.

But one of the descriptions I think that I would take would be this. It is an age of persuading. To the left of us and to the right of us. And everywhere we go we are being persuaded.

We are persuaded how to spend our money. We are persuaded where to spend our holidays. And I think with the colourful brochures that come out about this time of the year and you think of the weather we have today, perhaps not a great deal of persuading is needed for some of the warmer parts of the world.

[3 : 2 3] But persuasion seems to be to the left of us and to the right of us. It is an age of that. People are selling and projecting their products and making us feel as if we could never live without these things.

What we must do, where we go, and what we should do with our money. But here is something quite different. Here is a man talking about the greatest persuasion that he had ever known.

To be persuaded of God. To be persuaded of the Christian faith. And we can describe, can't we, the Apostle Paul as a man.

That however we may look at his teachings and say, well this is a great part, or here is another great part of his teaching. And of his bravery and his courage and whatever might strike us particularly, there is one thing that would come right through.

This man's total commitment. He was able to say, I am fully persuaded. And in thinking of his words, I began to think of myself.

[4 : 33] And wondered, where do I fit in there exactly? Am I able to say with all my heart and my soul and my mind, yes Paul, I am with you there.

I am fully persuaded. And I thought I'd like to examine the way he has come to the conclusion that he comes to in this great and exciting eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

Let me take you back to a part of the experience in the Book of Acts, where Paul is standing before the governors there, and he is being questioned regarding his faith.

And if you remember a well-known chapter, chapter 26, where he gave his famous testimony, at midday, O King Agrippa, I saw a light shining above the shining of the sun, and a voice saying to me in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And I said, who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus. You remember the well-known words when there was a divine intervention in the life of Saul, who became the Apostle Paul.

[5 : 39] And that was parts of a chapter where he is giving his testimony, his story, to ungodly leaders of society at that time.

And he's been given permission to speak. And this is how it begins. Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then he began the verses I quoted to you now.

At midday, O King, I saw. And you can imagine how he felt. He would be recalling it vividly to his heart and his soul, the time when he felt so angry with his Christian sect that seemed to be a threat to the faith of Judaism, and that he would do anything to destroy it.

And then, by his own words, in another place, he went breathing out threatenings. And his voice joined the voice of others in condemning men, women, and children to death.

His enthusiasm and his zeal and his hatred of any opposition to the Jewish faith knew no bounds. And he had letters of commendation to go to Damascus to seek out the Christians there.

[6 : 46] His name was a terror to the land. And he was on his way. But God had other plans.

And as he was on his way, he saw this great light and heard the voice of Jesus speaking unto him. And he explains to the governors there how he heard the voice of Jesus and how he recognized this voice and how he was given his great commission and the beautiful words regarding the forgiveness of sins.

He tells him all that. But these are the words that I am particularly interested in tonight. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost, almost, thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

Now, in some versions, it has something like this. Are you trying to make me into a Christian or something? You can take the version that you think is the right one, but I believe the one in the authorized way I have here is so clear because it is confirmed by the next verse.

If you follow with me, let me read verse 28 again. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And here is the response by the apostle.

[8 : 07] And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou, but all that hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am except these bonds.

I'm convinced in that little passage there that Agrippa, although he was flippant and a cruel and a worldly and a sinful man, I do believe as far as he was speaking at that moment that he was as sincere as he was capable of being sincere and that the apostle takes him up on that.

You say, you're almost a Christian? That is my heart desire, not only for you, but everyone in this room today, that they might be as I am with the faith that I have except for these bonds that I am in.

He had a great burden for souls. He did not fear wherever he was, whether he was in the prison or whether he was speaking to the Jews, either when he was being jeered at or sometimes attended to with some diligence, whatever the situation would be, he would always unfailingly speak a word about the Lord Jesus Christ and the work of grace performed in his heart and in his soul.

Now we have a man here, a man who is fully persuaded. Now that's what I want to bring to all of us here, including myself tonight.

[9 : 46] A man who is fully persuaded. There is no shade of doubt in his mind at all. In his mind and his thinking, in his heart and his emotions, and his thoughts and will, all of him as a person, he is committed to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

circumstances are hardly relevant to him, whether it is prosperity or adversity, freedom or in prison, being acclaimed or whether he is disdained, whichever it is, there is one thing that remains certain that he is fully persuaded of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's a great place to be. And I'm asking you and myself here respectfully tonight. Are we in that position? Because if we are in that position, there is a singleness of purpose.

There is a clarity of vision. And you know by that person that they are unmistakably Christian. Both belief and behavior are wedded together in a lovely bond of grace.

There are no inconsistencies altogether in them. What they believe and how they behave are bound together in a blessed union, unmistakably Christian, fully persuaded.

[11 : 13] this is the man that we have here. Now what I'd like to do tonight, by God's grace, is to look at the gospel from this view and the benefits of the gospel, the beauty and the loveliness of the gospel in this great chapter and the end of this chapter that seems to reach great heights.

I can well imagine him to be, you know, I was going to say a Welsh preacher and I'm sure a Gaelic preacher in the languages that we know of. When they were carried, as if it were, on a wonderful breeze from heaven and it reached a great height.

I can see the apostle there. Although he's writing, you can see, can't you, the words are rising up that there is no power on earth or in hell or anything that can be past, present or future that is able to separate us from the love of Christ which is in Christ, love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A great, tremendous height of assurance. Shall we look at that for a moment and see if there is a comfort for all our souls here tonight. The first point I'd like to bring to you is this, the protection of a Christian.

What do you think of the days? They're strange days, aren't they? They're frightening days. They will be very frightening days of the church of God were it not that we knew that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.

[12 : 42] Yet, there are fearful days to live in. When we listen to the news, we listen with apprehension in our hearts and wondering what will be the next thing that we hear. And everything that we hear seems to be so out of proportion of what it used to be.

The rumours and the clouds of great and dreadful wars that hardly bear thinking about. Of economic disasters throughout the world that we cannot really see solutions for.

Of the future of our children that we tremble for them. And if we could, and I know we cannot, we would live their lives for them in order to protect them from all the evils of the age that we are living in.

They are fearful days and they are frightening days of uncertainty. What's he got to say about that? What he's saying is this, that the Christian in whatever century we are in, or whatever condition that century brings into the life of the world, or the life of the nation, or to the history of the church, whatever it does, that the Christian has the protection of God's grace.

Do you believe that? From the depths of your being, do you believe that? The old revival people that I knew as a boy from the 1904 revival in Wales, I think has a little favourite of my grandmothers and she took me nearly everywhere.

[14 : 16] And so I met many of her friends, much of the conversation went over my head, but I always remember this one thing, how they greeted one another. And I'll say to you in English, they would say something like this, well, how are you keeping, how are you?

And if it was a Christian from the revival of Dan said, it always had this kind of terminology, they'd say being kept. It meant very little to me then, but then I thought what a wonderful answer that was.

Being kept, whatever trial or affliction or sorrow, adversity, prosperity, loneliness or popularity, whatever the circumstances were, the main thing was this, that they were being kept by the grace of God.

Why were they and others like them able to say that? Because we are kept. If our wealth should be taken away, if our health should fail, if our status should be lost, if we should be in some way in persecution by some dreadful power to lose our good name that we would cherish very much, if we would lose these things, how would it be?

How would it be? I think of Job. And where the devil came and asked him, attempted Job and asked God for permission, and he allowed him, he said, well look at your servant Job, no wonder he praises you, he's doing very nicely, he's got plenty of children, he's got plenty of cattle, plenty of sheep, he's very well to do, and he's prospering, and it is no wonder that Job is praising God.

[16 : 14] Test him, and see if he'll curse you. And so he lost many precious things. he lost his children, it's a great loss.

He lost his wealth, he lost his health. See, many people say, and I never argue, I know that they mean it sincerely, if you've got your health, you've got everything.

I know it is a very valuable thing, but there are greater things than even health, I respectfully say. He lost all that, and yet, you know, if you remember the words that that man said, they were these, the Lord gave, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.

How is a person able to say such things? How can a person, and especially in the light of the New Testament, and the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we are told something here that seems to be a remarkable thing.

And here are the verses, and Paul tells us himself, he says, no one is going to separate you from me. No one is going to separate you from the love of God. For once you have believed, whatever wind may blow, whatever storm may come, whatever disappointment may be your lot, you shall be kept safe in the arms of our God.

[17 : 40] This is how he puts it. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ. Consider the love of Christ, the love that passes knowledge.

Try and measure the length, the breadth, the height, the depth, and there is no measurement. There will be no measuring line that will be able to go in any direction to be able to say, I've got its height, or I've got its depth.

It reaches to the deepest depth of my heart. It reaches to the heights of heaven. I've been able to get there. No, it is beyond measurement. It passes knowledge, the love of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And if that, and that is in the heart of a Christian, well, what will separate him from that? Shall tribulation, and those who have known tribulation, would not welcome tribulation, but yet, in their time of trial and their difficulty, would often say something like this, if it had not been for this, I would not approve the Lord like I did through him.

It is an amazing thing. I found it in astonishing places, where I felt there could be nothing but absolute desolation, and sorrow, and despair. And there has been sorrow, but the sorrow of love, and yet, through it all, I've heard Christians say, yet the Lord, I proved the Lord in such a way that I never thought was possible.

[19 : 11] So we answer, shall tribulation separate me from the love of Christ? The answer is no. Shall distress, ah, distress strikes to the very depths of a person's heart, distress, and if we have grown at all in years or in time, we won't have travelled far, or we have known some distress in our lives, you have, I have, those wounds of the heart, that you hardly dare expose or share with anyone, and yet, if you are a Christian, you are able to say, if somebody should ask you, has that separated you from the love of Christ?

The distress, and you might say like this, never was a sorrow like mine, you might go as far as that, never was there a distress like mine, you might feel like that, or like Job who felt very strongly, give me a pen of iron, give me a piece of granite, and if you know what I feel like, of course I've got feelings, I will write my feelings with a pen of iron in that granite, that's how I feel, that's this I know, I know that my redeemer liveth, and out of my flesh I shall see him, what's he saying?

He's saying, no, distress will not separate me from the love of God, shall persecution, I don't know, I'm sure that in your pulpits here, like in my pulpits at home, we have had a number of people either from China, communist China, or from the Iron Curtain countries, pastors, who have been able to come across, or have been allowed to come across, eventually, well-known names, I'm not naming them now, and who have spoken in our congregation, and this is the amazing thing, you see, that persecution, they take as the norm, that we are in a freak situation, that we do not have the persecution that they have, and if you ask them the question, has persecution driven you further away from God, or separated you from the love of Christ, the answer will be, not only no, that hasn't happened, but it has made us strong in him, kept, kept in tribulation, kept in distress, kept in persecution, kept in famine, kept in nakedness, kept in peril, kept in the violence, the sword, all these things, who are these strange people, who is

Paul representing the saints, that he is so fully persuaded, and he talks of the protection of the Christian, he is not saying now, you will avoid these things, because you are a Christian, there will be no tribulations, there will be no distress, there will be no persecution, there will be no famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, he is not saying that at all, indeed he is telling us, it is more likely that we shall be in these things, because we are in a fallen world, and aliens in this world, but what he is saying is, in that, we should be kept, we shall be inseparable, nothing, nothing, shall separate us from the love of God, which is saying Christ Jesus, our Lord, and then he goes to describe it in a very lovely way, verses 26 and 37, as it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter, nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us, he is summing up that list now, now I am sure you will have considered, but may I consider with you, these thoughts are on verse 37, now he said look at those things again, what are they, these things, are we coming out to the list, can't we, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, nay, no, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, and I thought of that, that doesn't make sense, not ordinary sense, now you think of the illustration, and then see what is he saying, there can only be two in a battle, unless you think of something like a draw,

I should imagine, only two in a battle, where you have the victor and the vanquished, and so if we're having a situation now, where the victor, and the power of persecution, and of the world, are coming against the Christian, and here they are, in layers, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, and here is a Christian, and many of them being martyred, and many dying, and you might say, they are the vanquished, tell me Paul, what are you talking about, they are the vanquished, in the eyes of the world, just a moment, says the apostle, just a moment, the story isn't finished for them, this is a very brief victory for these, it seems as if they were victorious, but these from the dust of death shall rise to claim their mansions in the skies, they shall rise above their conquerors, they are more than conquerors, it's a wonderful thought, consider it, whatever may be our lots, we are able to say, from the dust and the ashes of persecution, on all these things, nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, tell me how

[24 : 59] Paul, through him that loved us, that's the first point, really asking him, why is Paul fully persuaded, and he gives us the first reason, he says, one is this, he said, let me describe to you the protection of a Christian, in all the adversities and the difficulties of a Christian living in a sinful, perverse, and alien world, and opposing Christianity, yet in all that he will prove the lovely grace of God, the lovely love of Christ, and also the safe keeping, and knowing that nothing shall separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord, being kept, are we there, are you persuaded, that that is so, or could be so, being kept, and the second point is this, the position of a Christian which explains why we are kept, to go back a little on what I just said, we are more than conquerors in those things, why?

Through him, that loved us, and that's the key, it's the key to everything, it's the key, you know, when we think of that divine intervention, in the life of Saul, who became the apostle Paul, and there came a time in his life, when he turned directions from an eternal destiny, of eternal loss, God laid hold upon him, and the Holy Spirit arrested him, in his tracks, and God intervened, and from that moment, this man's face was turned Godward, and something wonderful happened in the soul of this man, his position became a changed one, I was thinking the other day, I'm not a very good committee person, but I very often have to attend committees, and I do my dutiful best, and one phrase I hear people say sometimes about another, who may be speaking quite strongly about a certain point, and then in the next meeting he takes a totally different attitude, and somebody might say, you have changed your position, why?

And he could say to the apostle Paul, you have changed your position, question, why is it that you are breathing out threatenings, and now, ere long, you'll be preparing yourself to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, you have changed your position, what is the position of the Christian, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us, this is our position, in the day of judgments, do you sometimes think of that day when the end of the world shall come, and our blessed Lord in glory, and the culmination of all things, and the judgments of all, and there in that great day, that final word, depart from me, cursed,

I never knew you, or enter into the inheritance prepared for you, whichever it may be, it is a final word then, in the day of judgment, Paul is saying this, you say, in that day, how will you stand, Paul, I shall stand firmly, firmly, before God, before God, that great and majestic God, perfect in all his attributes, in everything that he is, perfection itself, in his righteousness and his holiness, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, infinity, eternity, his love, his righteousness, his mercy, his goodness, all the attributes of God, the moral and the natural attributes of God, the communicable and the incommunicable attributes of God, that he is perfect, and the sheer immensity of our God, and we're asking Paul, will you stand in that day, Paul, and we know from his writings that he does not fear the wrath of God, he'll stand in that day, do you know these words, the terrors of law, and of

God, with me, can have nothing to do, my saviour's obedience and blood, hide all my transgressions from view, are you safe, are we safe, in this thought, that when that day comes, and we know there will be such a day, that we'll be able to say, after having done all, we shall stand in that day, and that we are fully persuaded, that we shall stand, and that when the wrath of God is against sin, that we shall not fear the wrath of God, because for us it has been met on Calvary, we shall stand, and we shall be kept in that day, no punishment, and no strangement, and no second death, or no eternal damnation will ever be ours, but that we shall be welcomed, and we shall have a welcome into the everlasting kingdom, of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, well how can that be?

[30 : 49] Let me read you the verses, verse 33, who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?

It's as if there were a court scene, and the apostle is describing it like that, now let me show you my friends, this is what has happened, is as if he were in some great court scene, and God himself is a judge, who shall lay anything against the elect of God, but we might say, well when I think of myself and my unworthiness, how shall I ever stand there, I tremble at the very thoughts, then he says, well, who is he that condemneth, who is there to condemn, then, is it not a picture here, that all charges have been dropped, how is it that all charges have been dropped, listen to verse 34, it is Christ that died, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us, what then has happened to us, then let me take you, and let us come now, to the lovely arena, and the area of grace, of our

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the most holy one, who was absolute deity and perfect humanity, the only begotten Son of God, and let us see what is required on our behalf, and what he has given for us, and made possible for ourselves, here am I, a sinful creature, and destined for eternal damnation, that would be my lot, unless there is a divine intervention, when the Holy Spirit quickens me, and enlightens my understanding, and I begin to think, on my destiny, I begin to think, of the destiny of my immortal soul, I begin to think, of life, and death, and after death, and these things, and there is a working of grace beginning, and I begin to consider God, the God who is so pure, three things that he cannot do, the God that cannot lie, the God that cannot look upon sin, the God in whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning, the God who is constant integrity and veracity of character, and he is constant in his righteousness and his holiness and his mercy and his love, this grace and his awful

God, this glorious and this frightening God, this creator and the upholding of all things, oh how can I whose nature's fear is dark, whose mind is dim, before the ineffable appear, or upon my naked spirit bear the uncreated beam, what has he done, two things, there is the law, love the Lord thy God with all thy heart soul mind, love thy neighbour as myself, which is our blessed saviour, summing up the ten commandments, our attitude to God and our attitude to each other, and I might say, well, it seems reasonable enough to love God with my total being, to love my neighbour as myself, but when I begin to try my sinful heart and my love of myself, I cannot, so we fall short of the glory of God and the wages of sin is death, how can I be helped O Lord, so we turn our eyes upon the saviour, and the very heart of the gospel, listen to these words in chapter 4 25, who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification, what happens there?

God imputes, the little word puts, God puts on him, he never becomes unclean, he never becomes sinful, but he bears the weight of our shame and our sin, our sin is counted on him, that's a terrible thing when you think of it, and yet a wonderful thing, and then we come to the place, now what is the penalty for sin, the wages of sin is death, and we know that is the second death, eternal damnation, that he died on the cross, what is the meaning of this cross, oh wondrous cross, oh blessed cross, what is the meaning of this cross, the words speak for themselves, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, the suffering on the cross, in quality, intensity, is equal to damnation for us all, there were nails, they pierced, but there was a piercing, and there was an anguish, and a wounding, and there was a suffering beyond any comprehension of ours, he pays the penalty for sin in full, that's the cross of our saviour, and so we look at him,

[36 : 26] Paul looked at him, and what happens when a soul has been awakened, and becomes convinced that he needs forgiveness, and he needs to be clean, and he needs to be right with his maker, and he desires to be with God one day, and he's been awakened for these things, and nothing less than the gospel of our blessed saviour will satisfy him, and then God in his mercy hears his cry as he is in the valley of the conviction of sin, and he begins to see there the beauty of the rose of Sharon, and of the lily of the valley, and the fairest of ten thousand to my soul, my bright and morning star, our Lord, and our saviour, Jesus Christ.

What has he done there? He paid the penalty and then there is a real and a physical resurrection. He ascends to heaven, and there he is in the right hand of the majesty and high.

And we ask, well, what can there be for me? As we come, we are given grace to repent, holy sorrow, and grace to believe.

By grace I saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God. And when this great transaction is going on, what takes place here is as if something remarkable and something remarkable is taking place.

All my sinfulness and all my sin, there it is, it is nailed to the tree, and the penalty is paid in full. But he leaves me not naked, but does he give me as my sin is imputed to him.

[38 : 04] his righteousness is imputed to us. Do you see the beauty of that? McShane had this sentence, dressed, he said, in beauty, not mine own.

Wasp, cleansed, we're forgiven in that great act on Calvary, but at the same time, we have a robe of righteousness, imputed righteousness, a righteousness that is acceptable in the sight of God.

and that never changes. Through faith, through faith in Christ, we appropriate the benefits of Calvary, the forgiveness of sins, and the imputed righteousness of Christ, which justifies us in the sight of God.

And we, says Paul, in the Ephesian epistle, who are one so far away, are made nigh, how? Through the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of sins. So if you should ask Paul like this, tell me, Paul, how are you so sure of yourself that you're able to say that your position of a Christian is a safe one?

He says this, because of this one thing, I am a forgiven man. I am accepted in the righteousness of Christ.

[39 : 33] I am found in him. Not having mine own righteousness like filthy rags. These little arguments, I did my best, I do this, I go to church as often as I can, I'm as kind as I can to others, I give to this collection, and I give to another collection, I'm as good a Christian as anybody goes to any church.

That kind of phraseology that we hear abounding all around us, which really builds up to a kind of self righteousness. He could have said, I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, or a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

I was circumcised, I had all the things that needed, I knew the law, I knew the Psalms, I knew these things. A Pharisee, I was blameless regarding these things. But all those things, he said, if they were anything for my salvation, they did not give me salvation, they are in my sight now, he said, but done, they are but lost, why?

Because I have found that in Christ, and in Christ alone, in the excellency and knowledge of Christ, that I have hope. We dare not lean or trust any other frame, however good we may think we are, if you have come to him in that intimate moment of believing, which could happen, you know, by his grace now, that intimate moment, when you see, not that way anymore, Lord, not anymore, even though it be dressed up in religion like Paul was, not anymore, Lord, from now, Lord, thee alone, a forgiven man, a different position, a different position in the sight of men, but a different position in the sight of God, counted now as a child of God, and be able to say from the depths of our being,

Abba, Father, and from henceforth, we have the right to call him Father. Then, lastly, the persuasion of a Christian, for I am persuaded that neither life, neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor heights, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

[42 : 07] Do you see what he's saying? in the light of all that, in the light of all that, when I look at the love of my Saviour, and when I see of that grace that invaded my heart, and when I see of the protecting grace in my life, and his care for me, and his keeping power over me, and when I see the secret of all that, that he loved with such a love, that he came to me and had mercy upon me, and I was a recipient of his pardoning grace, in the light of all that, I am persuaded.

It's a great place to come to. You there? Unmistakably, Christian, I am persuaded.

He's going on to say here, you know, even, he said, even if death came my way, even though I walked to the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Life, he includes, with all its varying circumstances, he knows that he will never leave him, nor forsake him, nor powers of darkness, angels and principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor anything that we can bring into our imagination or beyond our imagination that we cannot even think in our knowledge now, neither shall any other creature, our creature's not even known, he implies here, neither any other creature, nothing shall drag me away, we are inseparable, nothing shall separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Persuaded, persuaded enough to stand for him in time of persecution, I am persuaded, put yourself in eastern Russia, eastern communist bloc, and have the choice of going free, if you deny the Lord, and you turn and you say, words to the effect, I am persuaded of my God, or in the circumstances of life, even wherever we may live now, that everything seems to be going against us, and people say, like the wife of Job said to him, curse God and die, that we'd be able to say, no, for we are persuaded, what are we persuaded of?

[44 : 53] That all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the God, according to his purpose, what is he saying? There is a greater hold on me, than even my feeble hold on him, I have embraced him, but his embrace of me, may I put it like this to you, in death he cradles us, he cradles us, and whether it should be slow or sudden, whatever it may be, until gentle death at last, for heaven awakes me, he cradles us there, in life, his love embraces us, and sometimes when our hearts are low, we feel the love of Christ reaching the very depths of our being and lifting us up, and when faced with the powers of evil, his love protects us, whatever lurks in the present or in the future, he says,

I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things that 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.

May I quote you this poem? Should all the hosts of death, that's a big phrase, isn't it? Should all the hosts of death and powers of hell unknown put their most dreadful form of rage and malice on, I shall be saved.

For Christ displays superior power and guardian grace. What is that man saying? He is joining Paul and saying, I am persuaded in the valley of the shadow of death, in life with all his adversities, in alien situations or in prosperity, in strength or in weakness, in life or in death, whichever it may be, I am persuaded that there is nothing that can separate me from my God because of the love of Jesus Christ.

What awaits us? An inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, world, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, you think, you think, now the choice, the pleasures, the sin, or our vain ambitions for a season, and then a dreadful end, or the affliction, yes, even the affliction, or the people of God, but we have an eye for the recompense of the reward, and what do we see?

[48 : 06] We see a God, and we see a glory, and we see the loveliness of our triune God, and when we come into the everlasting kingdom, it is personal attention every time, and God himself shall wipe every tear from our eyes, and the tears of our hearts, there shall be no more death there, or sorrow, or crying, or hunger, or thirst, or any of these things.

In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you, so that where I am, there ye may be also. Where are we?

Are we there? Are we in that glorious certain hope, that lively hope, that Peter called it, that saving hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

We come back to the rather quiet words, but firm words, come from a heart of faith, a heart that has been conquered by the grace of God.

I am persuaded. Shall we pray? our gracious and our heavenly father, we thank thee that we can come to thee, thou who art our great and our only God, for there is none like unto thee, or ever can be compared with thee.

[49 : 42] And yet, O Lord, thou knowest of the fall of a sparrow, the numbers of the hairs of our head, thou knowest a reflutter of anxiety, thou knowest our sin, there is nothing here to thee.

O God of mercy and God of grace, look upon us, and add daily to thy kingdom, such as should be saved, for thy name's sake.

Amen. Amen.