

In the United States of America, the liberal media is concerned when a murderer on death row in Florida, is executed, and the execution doesn't go smoothly. The criminal experiences some intense pain before he dies. How terrible. There is no discussion on the butcherous tactics the criminal used 13 years prior when he committed murder. The liberal media wants the death penalty to end for barbarous criminals. Rather, we should spend 60,000 a year to keep these murderers alive for life. On the otherhand, today Christians are being attacked throughout the world. No one seems to be concerned when the followers of Islam tell a Christian convert or die. And then the Islamists proceed to chop off the Christians head with a sword, or gouge out their eyes. Or repeatedly rape their wives. Truly, we Christians are considered as sheep for the slaughter in our world. Makes a Christian sometimes wonder, "God, do you really love me? Do you really care for me? Why are the bad guys winning?"

A father and husband dials up his wife on a cell phone from an airplane that is controlled by AlQueda terrorists. The man tells his wife on the phone that he loves her deeply, and that he and a group of others are going to try and take control of the plane. The cell phone goes dead, a fierce struggle ensues, and the airplane dives and crashes into a wooded area in Pennsylvania. The wife is left behind. She must now raise her children alone. All she has is memories of the man she loved. Separated forever, in this life from the one she loved. Separations, they occur all the time in our lives.

A son of daughter goes off to college, or moves to their own apartment after they complete high school. A house which used to be alive with activity, young people popping in and out of the house has ended. A separation has occurred. That leads our minds to wonder, could we be cut off from the most important person who loves us-Jesus Christ. Could the daily troubles we face on the outside, the pressure we feel on the inside, separate us from God's love? Could physical torture for our faith, bodily wants such as lack of food or clothes deprive us of God's love for us? While any of these troubles might weaken or shake a Christian's love for God, they can never separate us from God's love for us! God's love continues to come to us in an uninterrupted flow. So consider with me today the thought: "Never Separated from the Love of God!"

Troubles and Hardships. Who here today can say they haven't had any? A conflict with a friend or neighbor, a serious illness or surgery, your marriage just isn't what it should be. Your daughter refuses to talk to you-again, you're in trouble financially, you flunked the test. Now your sleep schedule is messed up and your edgy during the day.

And what was the thing that finally gave us peace? It was the smile of God upon us. It was something He did for us in His mighty love. We came to learn that His face was shining behind the clouds and soon life was brighter and better again.

When troubles and hardships come, Christians are often tempted to believe that this is an indication that they have lost the love of God. They are like children who think that when their parents spank them or will not let them have their way to do what they want to do or to have what they would like to have, that their parents do not love them. And yet the Bible says that he that spares the rod hates his son, and that he who loves him disciplines him when he needs it. In the same way, we ought not imagine that when trouble comes into our lives, this is any indication that the Lord's love somehow has been

separated from us. In fact, the Bible says, "For whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and scourges every son whom he receives."

The inspired writer Paul knew what he was talking about, and his own life is a good commentary on this text. Paul came from an aristocratic family. In his youth he was highly thought of among the Jewish people. In terms of this world we could say that he had it made. And then he became a Christian and lost everything. The rest of his life he spent in hard labor, persecuted, and often enduring great suffering. When he said, "No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us," he knew what he was talking about. It made no difference to him what happened in this world. He knew that God loved him in spite of his unworthiness, and he knew that this love of God was not just a temporary or passing thing. He knew that none of these sufferings could separate him from the love of Christ.

Remember, God is for you. Not maybe, not has been, or would be, but God is! He is for you today. At this hour. At this minute. No need to wait in line or come back tomorrow. He is with you. He could not be closer to you than he is at this second. Had he a calendar, your birthday would be circled. If he drove a car, your name would be on his bumper. If there a tree in heaven, he's carved your name in the bark. We know he has a tattoo, and we know what it says. "I have written your name on my hand", he declares in Isaiah 49. God is with you. Knowing that, who is against you? Can death harm you now? Can disease rob your life? Can your purpose be taken or your value diminished? No. Though hell itself may set itself against you, no one can defeat you. You are protected. God is with you.

"He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all good things?" Suppose a man comes upon a child being beaten by thugs. He dashes into the mob, rescues the boy, and carries him to the hospital. The youngster is nursed to health. The man pays for the child's treatment. He learns that the child is an orphan and adopts him as his own and gives the boy his name. And then, one night, months later, the father hears the son sobbing into his pillow. He goes to him and asks about the tears. "I'm worried Daddy. I'm worried about tomorrow. Where will I get food to eat? How am I going to buy clothes to stay warm? And where will I sleep?"

The father is rightfully troubled. Haven't I shown you? Don't you understand? I risked my life to save you. I gave my money to treat you. You wear my name. I've called you my son. Would I do all that and then not meet your needs?" This is Paul's question. Would he who gave his son to die on Calvary's cross for us not meet our needs?

But still we worry. We worry about the IRS and the SAT and the FBI. We worry about education, recreation, and constipation. We worry that we won't have enough money, and when we have money we worry that we won't manage it well. We worry that the world will end before the parking meter expires. We worry that someday we'll learn that fat-free yogurt was fattening.

Honestly, now. Did God save you so you would fret? Would he teach you to walk just to watch you fall? Would he be nailed to the cross for your sins and then disregard your prayers? Come on. Is the Scripture teasing us when it says, "He will give his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. I don't think so either.

You and I might consider our emergence from trouble and hardship as mere escape....Like whew, I got through this one. In truth, it is victory. In every encounter with adversity, even when apparently overcome by death, the Christian is the victor. We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

I'm sure some of us have observed a sailboat bobbing up and down in a storm. Only a secure anchor and rope helped that particular boat to survive the storm. As Christians, I am certain there have been many times when we have felt very much like that sailboat. The storms of life can be pretty fierce. We seem like such a tiny craft in the midst of such a big and cruel lake. The wind and waves beat against us, threatening to smash us to pieces.

At times like that it is good for us to remember the words of assurance which the inspired writer Paul offers in our text. He reminds us of the fact that as long as God is with us, there is no power on earth and no power in hell that can ever tear us away from Him. We have the strongest possible anchor. The storms will still come, but we have the assurance that God will help us ride out those storms. Our boat will never sink, since God is with us always.

This is the same God who has promised, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." The only way to get out of God's hand is if we jump out. No nothing can ever tear us away from God. Paul says, "I am persuaded, 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." He knew that death could not separate him from God's love. According to church history Paul was imprisoned a second time in the city of Rome. And that he was executed. The Roman government had his head chopped off. But even in death, Paul had stated to his friend Timothy, "The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To Him, be glory forever and ever." Death would not separate him from the love of Christ. Neither would living in this life and having to deal with persecution, famine, danger or sword. Paul knew God would be by his side every step of the way, and would keep him safe as long as he lived. Living wouldn't separate him from the love of Christ. Neither would angels. Paul was sure that the angels could not do it, for the good angels would not want to separate him from the love of God, and the evil angels were subject to God's power. He was confident that he was safe in the present, and that the future was in God's hands, and that God would not let anything happen that could possibly separate him from his love.

I am sure that all of us would like to have the kind of assurance that Paul displays in this text. We would all like to be able to say with him, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." WE can have that kind of confidence and that kind of assurance, for we have the same promises from God that Paul had. And the Lord Jesus died for all of us, just as surely as he died for Paul, for the Bible says that he tasted death for every man. In fact, the only thing that can rob us of the love of God is our refusal to believe what he has promised. May God help us to believe in those promises, and then we will be able to say with the apostle, "I am persuaded that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."