

Sunday 26th July 2026. Benefice Holy Communion, Gilling.

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ?” asks St Paul in today’s Epistle. We continue in Romans 8, where Paul speaks not only to those for whom faith feels easy, but to those in hospital rooms, at gravesides, under financial pressure, in private disappointment, or carrying unanswered questions. He writes to believers who know suffering is real, yet he wants them to know something more real still: the love of God in Christ Jesus is stronger than everything that comes against them.

Notice what Paul does not say. He does not say all things are good. Sickness, bereavement, betrayal, injustice, anxiety, and pain are not good in themselves. Christianity never asks us to pretend darkness is light. But Paul says that in all things God works, not merely in the pleasant things, or in the things we understand, but in all things, God is present, active, wise, and purposeful. The believer’s life is not ruled by accident, fate, luck, or chaos. Our Father is not absent from the details. He is weaving threads we would never choose into a pattern we cannot yet see. The promise is not that every event will feel good, but that God will bring good from it. And that good, verse 29 tells us, is that we should be conformed to the image of his Son. God’s deepest purpose is not simply to make us comfortable, but to make us like Christ: shaping patience in our waiting, compassion in suffering, courage in trials, humility in weakness, and hope in tears.

Paul then lifts our eyes from today’s struggles to God’s eternal purposes. St Paul states, that those God foreknew, he predestined; those he predestined, he called; those he called, he justified; and those he justified, he glorified.

This is not a fragile chain held together by our strength. It is the golden chain of God's grace. From eternity past to eternity future, salvation rests in the hands of God. That should humble us, because we did not rescue ourselves. It should steady us, because God does not begin what he cannot finish, and it should comfort us, because St Paul speaks of glorification as though it is already done that the purpose of God, the final outcome for his people is secure. The road may be rough, but the destination is not in doubt. The Christian can say, "I am not yet what I shall be, but by grace I am not what I was, and God will complete what he has begun."

Then Paul asks the question every fearful heart needs to hear: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" He does not mean no one will oppose us. People may oppose us, circumstances may press us, the enemy may accuse us, and our own conscience may trouble us. But none of these can overrule God. If the Judge of all the earth has declared us righteous in Christ, no accusation has the final word.

How do we know God is for us? Paul points to the cross: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all." The cross is God's unanswerable proof of love. When you are tempted to ask, "Does God care?" look at Calvary. When you wonder, "Will God abandon me?" look at the Son of God given for sinners. If God has given the greatest gift, will he fail to give the grace we need today? Christ died, Christ was raised, Christ is at the right hand of God, and Christ intercedes for us. The risen Jesus is not indifferent to your struggle. He represents you. He prays for you. He holds you.

Finally, Paul asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” He names the things that frighten us: trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword. He does not deny that believers suffer. But then comes the shout of faith: “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” More than conquerors does not mean we never bleed, grieve, feel weak, or cry. It means that suffering does not win. Even when we lose much, we do not lose Christ. Even through the valley, the Shepherd walks with us.

Paul ends with holy confidence: neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Death cannot separate us, because Christ has conquered the grave. Life cannot separate us, because Christ sustains us day by day. The present cannot separate us, because grace is sufficient now. The future cannot separate us, because tomorrow is already in God’s hands.

So what do we do with this word? We trust God when we cannot trace Him. We stand firm when accusations come. We endure hardship without believing we have been abandoned. We comfort one another with the truth that God is working, God is saving, God is for us, and God’s love will not let us go. If you are weary today, hear the gospel: your security is not in the strength of your grip on God, but in the strength of His grip on you. If you are afraid, hear the promise: nothing can separate you from his love. If you are suffering, hear the hope: God is at

work even here.

Therefore we can say with St Paul, not timidly but triumphantly: in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Amen.