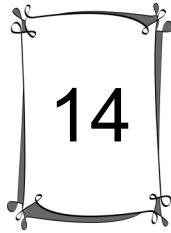


The background of the cover is a photograph of a scenic landscape. A paved road curves through a valley, bordered by a fence. To the left, a railway track with overhead power lines runs parallel to the road. The trees are in autumn, with yellow and orange leaves. In the distance, a large mountain peak is visible under a cloudy sky.

# Sermons of Robert Murray M'Cheyne

**14. Who shall  
Separate us**

Sermons  
of  
Robert Murray  
M'Cheyne



Who shall  
Separate us

***“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 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” Rom. 8:35-37.***

In this passage there are three very remarkable questions:

1. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Paul stands forth like a herald, and he looks up to the holy angels, and down to the accusing devils, and round about on a scowling world, and into conscience, and he asks, who can accuse one whom God has chosen, and Christ has washed? It is God who justifieth. The holy God has declared believers clean every whit.

2. “Who shall condemn?” Paul looks round all the judges of the world — all who are skilled in law and equity; he looks upward to the holy angels, whose superhuman sight pierces deep and far into the righteous government of God; he looks up to God, the judge of all, who must do right — whose ways are equal and perfect righteousness — and he asks, Who shall condemn?. It is Christ that died. Christ has paid the uttermost farthing: so that every judge must cry out, There is now no condemnation.

3. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Again, he looks round all created worlds — he looks at the might of the mightiest archangel — the satanic power of legions of devils — the rage of a God-defying world — the united forces of all created things; and, when he sees sinners folded in the arms of Jesus, he cries, “Who shall separate us from the

love of Christ?” Not all the forces of ten thousand worlds combined, for Jesus is greater than all. “We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

The love of Christ! Paul says: “The love of Christ passeth knowledge.” It is like the blue sky, into which you may see clearly, but the real vastness of which you cannot measure. It is like the deep, deep sea, into whose bosom you can look a little way, but its depths are unfathomable. It has a breadth without a bound, length without end, height without top, and depth without bottom. If holy Paul said this, who was so deeply taught in divine things — who had been in the third heaven, and seen the glorified face of Jesus — how much more may we, poor and weak believers, look into that love and say: It passeth knowledge!

There are three things in these words, of which I would speak.

I. The love of Christ.

II. The question, Who would separate us from it?

III. The truth, that whoever or whatever they are, they shall not be able.

### **I. I would speak of the love of Christ.**

1. *When did it begin?* — In the past eternity: “Then I was by him as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.” (Prov. 8:30, 31.) This river of love began to flow before the world was — from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Christ’s love to us is as old as the Father’s love to the Son. This river of light began to stream from Jesus toward us before the beams poured from

the sun — before the rivers flowed to the ocean — before angel loved angel, or man loved man. Before creatures were, Christ loved us. This is a great deep — who can fathom it? This love passeth knowledge.

2. *Who was it that loved?* It was Jesus, the Son of God, the second person of the blessed Godhead. His name is, “Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,” “King of kings and Lord of lords,” Immanuel, Jesus the Saviour, the only begotten of his Father. His beauty is perfect: he is the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person. All the purity, majesty, and love of Jehovah dwell fully in him. He is the bright and morning Star: he is the Sun of righteousness and the Light of the world: he is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valleys — fairer than the children of men. His riches are infinite: he could say, “All that the Father hath is mine.” He is Lord of all. All the crowns in heaven were cast at his feet — all angels and seraphs were his servants — all worlds his domain. His doings were infinitely glorious. By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible. He called the things that are not as though they were — worlds started into being at his word. *Yet he loved us.* It is much to be loved by one greater in rank than ourselves — to be loved by an angel; but, O, to be loved by the Son of God! — this is wonderful — it passeth knowledge.

3. *Whom did he love?* He loved us! He came into the world “to save sinners, of whom I am the chief.” Had he loved one as glorious as himself, we would not have wondered. Had he loved the holy angels, that reflected his pure, bright image,

we would not have wondered. Had he loved the lovely among the sons of men — the amiable, the gentle, the kind, the rich, the great, the noble — it would not have been so great a wonder. But, ah! he loved sinners — the vilest sinners — the poorest, meanest, guiltiest wretches that crawl upon the ground. Manasseh, who murdered his own children, was one whom he loved; Zaccheus, the grey-haired swindler, was another; blaspheming Paul was a third; the wanton of Samaria was another; the dying thief was another; and the lascivious Corinthians were more. “And such were some of you.” We were black as hell when he looked on us — we were hell-worthy, under his Father’s wrath and curse — and yet he loved us, and said: I will die for them. “Thou hast loved me out of the pit of corruption,” each saved one can say. Oh, brethren! this is strange love: he that was so great, and lovely, and pure, chose us, who were mean and filthy with sin, that he might wash and purify, and present us to himself. This love passeth knowledge!

4. *What did this love cost him?* When Jacob loved Rachel, he served seven years for her — he bore the summer’s heat and winter’s cold. But Jesus bore the hot wrath of God, and the winter blast of his Father’s anger, for those he loved. Jonathan loved David with more than the love of women, and for his sake he bore the cruel anger of his father, Saul. But Jesus, out of love to us, bore the wrath of his Father poured out without mixture. It was the love of Christ that made him leave the love of his Father, the adoration of angels, and the throne of glory. It was love that made him not despise the Virgin’s womb — it was love that brought him to the manger at Bethlehem — it was love that drove him into the wilderness; love made him a man of sorrows love made him

hungry, and thirsty, and weary — love made him hasten to Jerusalem — love led him to gloomy, dark Gethsemane — love bound and dragged him to the judgment hall — love nailed him to the cross — love bowed his head beneath the amazing load of his Father’s anger. “Greater love hath no man than this.” “I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

Sinners were sinking beneath the red-hot flames of hell; he plunged in and swam through the awful surge, and gathered his own into his bosom. The sword of justice was bare and glittering, ready to destroy us; He, the man that was God’s fellow, opened his bosom and let the stroke fall on him. We were set up as a mark for God’s arrows of vengeance; Jesus came between, and they pierced him through and through — every arrow that should have pierced our souls stuck fast in him. He, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree. As far as east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. This is the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. This is what is set before you to-day in the broken bread and poured-out wine. This is what we shall see on the throne — a Lamb as it had been slain. This will be the matter of our song through eternity: “Worthy is the Lamb!”

1. *O the joy of being in the love of Christ!* Are you in this amazing love? Has he loved you out of the pit of corruption? Then, he will wash you, and make you a king and a priest unto God. He will wash you in his own blood whiter than the snow — he will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. A new heart also will he give you. He will keep your conscience clean, and your heart right with God. He will put his Holy Spirit within you, and make you pray

with groanings that cannot be uttered. He will justify you — he will pray for you — he will glorify you. All the world may oppose you — dear friends may die and forsake you — you may be left alone in the wilderness; still you will not be alone Christ will love you still.

2. *O the misery of being out of the love of Christ!* If Christ loves you not, how vain all other loves! Your friends may love you — your neighbours may be kind to you — the world may praise you — ministers may love your souls; but, if Christ love you not, all creature-love will be vain. You will be unwashed, unpardoned, unholy — you will sink into hell, and all the creatures will stand around and be unable to reach out a hand to help you.

3. *How shall I know that I am in the love of Christ?* By your being drawn to Christ: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” Have you seen something attractive in Jesus? The world are attracted by beauty, or dress, or glittering jewels — have you been attracted to Christ by his good ointments? This is the mark of all who are graven on Christ’s heart — they come to him; they see Jesus to be precious. The easy world see no preciousness in Christ; they prize a lust higher, the smile of the world higher, money higher, pleasure higher; but those whom Christ loves he draws after him by the sight of his preciousness. Have you thus followed him, prized him — a drowning sinner cleaved to him? — then he will in no wise cast you out — in no wise, not for all you have done against him. “But I spent my best days in sin” — Still I will in no wise cast you out. “I lived in open sin” — I will in no wise cast you out. “But I have sinned against light and conviction”



— Still I will in no wise cast you out. “But I am a backslider”  
— Still the arms of his love are open to enfold your poor guilty soul, and he will not cast you out.

## **II. Many would separate us from Christ’s love.**

From the beginning of the world it has been the great aim of Satan to separate believers from the love of Christ; and though he never has succeeded in the case of a single soul, yet still he tries it as eagerly as he did at first. The moment he sees the Saviour lift a lost sheep upon his shoulder, from that hour he plies all his efforts to pluck down the poor saved sheep from its place of rest. The moment the pierced hand of Jesus is laid on a poor, trembling, guilty sinner, from that hour does Satan try to pluck him out of Jesus’ hand.

1. *He did this in old times*: “As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Verse 36). This is a cry taken from the Book of Psalms. God’s people in all ages have been hated and persecuted by Satan and the world. Observe,

(1). The reason: “For thy sake” — because they were like Jesus, and belonged to Jesus.

(2). The time: “All day long” — from morning till night. The world have a perpetual hatred against true believers, so that we have to say at evening: “Would God it were morning; and at morning, Would God it were evening.” They have no other perpetual hatred.

(3). The manner: “We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” The world care no more for ill-treating a Christian than the butcher does when he lays hold of a sheep for the slaughter. The very drunkards make a song of us. Such was the cry of believers of old. The same cry has been heard amid

the snowy heights of Piedmont; and, in later days, amid the green hills and valleys of Scotland. And we are miserably deceived if we flatter ourselves that the same cry will not be heard again. Is the devil changed? Does he love Christ and his dear people any better? Is the worldly heart changed? Does it hate God and God's people any less than it did? Ah! no. I have a deep conviction that, if God only withdraw his restraining grace, the flood-gates of persecution will soon break loose again; and many of you, left unconverted under our ministry, will turn out bloody persecutors — you will yet avenge yourselves for the sermons that have pricked your hearts.

2. *The apostle names seven forms in which trouble comes.* Two of them relate to the troubles that are common to man, and five to those that are more peculiar to the children of God.

(1). *Tribulation and distress:* “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.” God's children are not freed from distresses — sickness, poverty, loss of friends. Jesus said to them: “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” “Whom I love I rebuke and chasten.” Now, Satan tries to take advantage of these times of tribulation, to separate the soul from the love of Christ; he tempts the believer to despise the chastening of the Lord — to plunge into business, or among worldly friends, or to follow worldly means of soothing sorrow. Again: he tries to make the soul faint under them — repine and murmur, and charge God foolishly — not to believe his love and wisdom in the furnace. In these ways Satan tries to separate from the love of Christ. A time of tribulation is a time of danger.

(2). *Persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, swords* — all these are weapons which Satan makes use of against God's children. The history of the Church in all ages has been a history of persecution. No sooner does a soul begin to show concern for religion — no sooner does that soul cleave to Jesus, than the world talk, to the grief of those whom God hath wounded. What bitter words are hurled against that soul! In all ages this has been true: "They wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy." Those that eat the bread of God have often been driven from their quiet meal — those who are clothed with Christ have often had to part with worldly clothing, and have been exposed to famine, nakedness, peril, and sword — the last extremity. Cain murdered Abel. They killed the Prince of Life; and so all his creatures ever since have been exposed to the same. Do not say, The times are changed, and these are the days of toleration. Christ is not changed — Satan is not changed, and, when it suits his turn, he will use the same weapons.

### **III. All these cannot separate us.**

*"In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."*

How are we more than conquerors?

1. *We conquer even before the battle is done.* In all other battles we do not know how the victory is to turn until the battle is won. In the battle of Waterloo, it was long thought that the French had gained; and Napoleon sent several despatches to Paris, telling that he had won. But in the fight with the world, Satan, and the flesh, we know how the victory is to turn already. Christ has engaged to carry us through. He

will guard us against the darts of the law, by hiding us in his blood. He defends us from the power of sin by his Holy Spirit, put within us. He will keep us, in the secret of his presence, from the strife of tongues. The thicker the battle, the closer will he keep to us; so that we can sing already: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." We know that we shall overcome. Though the world were a million times more enraged — though the fires of persecution were again to be kindled — though my heart were a million times more wicked — though all the temptations of hell were let loose upon me — I know I shall overcome through him that loved me. When Paul and Silas sang in the low dungeon, they were more than conquerors. When Paul sang, in spite of his thorn, "I will glory in my infirmities," he was more than a conqueror.

2. *We gain by our conflict.* Often a victory is a loss. So it was in that battle in Israel, after the dark night in Gibeah. All Israel mourned, for a tribe was nearly cut off out of Israel; and so, in most victories, the song of triumph is mingled with the sobbings of the widow and orphan. Not so in the good fight of faith. We are more than conquerors. We gain by our enemies.

(1). *We cling closer to Christ.* Every wave of trouble for Christ's sake lifts the soul higher upon the Rock. Every arrow of bitterness shot after the believer makes him hide farther back in the clefts of Jesus. Be content, dear friend, to bear these troubles, which make you cling closer to your Beloved.

(2). *They shake us loose from sin.* If ye were of the world, the world would love its own. If the world smiled and fawned upon you, you would lie on its lap. But when it frowns, then Jesus is our all.

(3). *Greater is your reward in heaven.* We gain a brighter crown. Be not afraid; nothing shall ever separate you from the love of Christ. O that I could know that you were all in Christ's love — that the arms of Jesus were enfolding you — then I would know that all the hatred of men, and all the policy of hell, would never prevail against you! “If God be for you, who can be against you?” If God has chosen you — called you — washed you — justified you — then he will glorify you. yield to his loving hands, you that are not far from the kingdom of God! Let him wash you, for then he will carry you to glory.

