

God's Love and Our Assurance Pt 2

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[0 : 00] I don't know about you, I love a good courtroom drama. The other night, my wife Rachel and I, we were watching TV, as we do, and we saw this movie, A Few Good Men, which is basically Tom Cruise and Jack Nicholson battling it out in a courtroom.

It's got lots of great lines like, I want the truth, you can handle the truth. It's quite intense, pretty intense stuff. I don't know if you've ever been to court.

Have you ever been on trial? In the past couple of years, I've been to court twice. I didn't do anything wrong, by the way, but two of my friends had, and so I offered to sit with them just so they wouldn't feel alone.

One was for a driving misdemeanor. Another one was for something much, much more serious, and both were open and shut cases. In other words, their guilt was undeniable.

And even though I wasn't on trial, I was a nervous wreck for them, being at the mercy of the courts. What if the judge didn't get a good night's sleep and was in a bad mood?

[1 : 09] What if their lawyer was the best one they could afford, and therefore not as good as the prosecution? My friends were so nervous, we had to sit there again and again just praying over and over, just for a lenient sentence.

Our passage today is also about a Christian who's a nervous wreck because of their sin. Just so you know, so we're clear, sin is the crime of rebelling against God.

We sin in the way we disobey his word and set ourselves up in his place in our lives. And that means, if that's the definition, that we're all guilty sinners.

It seems that we too could be the nervous Christian in the court, because at some stage, all Christians will be nervous because of their sin.

Unsure whether we've gone too far this time, despite our many pleas for forgiveness. Unsure whether God really loves us, whether we'll really get to heaven because of the things we've done.

[2 : 20] Our passage today is five questions. It's five questions and their answers for the nervous Christian. To make it clear, the author has set it out like a courtroom drama.

So we've got a judge. That's God. We've got a defendant. That's you. We've got the prosecution, which is your guilty conscience, the people who know you and Satan.

And they've read out the charges. The charges are that you are a great sinner. Five questions for the nervous Christian on trial for their sin, designed to give total confidence, total confidence that not even your sin can ever separate you from the love of God or stop you getting to heaven.

Five questions for us now. So verse 31. What shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? And if you take the last part of that sentence, it says, who can be against us?

And there are lots of people or voices you could line up against you. And the scary thing is that most of their accusations are probably correct.

[3 : 41] If we listen to Satan's voice or the voice of those around us, we might struggle to believe whether God really loves us. But the verse looks very different when you add the first part back in.

If God is for us, who can be against us? It's an argument from greater to lesser. It's God versus the rest. When he is for us, it doesn't matter who is against us.

And in the New Testament, one of the big ideas is that God is our father. So whoever stands against us, God is our dad. And my dad is greater than theirs.

It's like this famous photo on the screen of John F. Kennedy. There's John F. Kennedy at his desk. You know, he's doing sort of presidential things, pointing and all that sort of business.

But the key thing to note is little John Jr. Using the desk as a cubby house. You see, if you're the son of the president, not even the might of Russia could stand against you.

[4 : 45] You're free to play like a child without a care in the world. How much more the children of God. If he is for us, who can be against us?

It's an argument from greater to lesser. And if that sounds too good to be true, then the second question shows how you can know that for sure. Verse 32.

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 things? If God took the most precious thing he had, his son Jesus, and gave him up for us all, why would he not also give us heaven as well?

It's like God is buying you a house, but he's already paid 99% of the deposit already. You can be sure about that remaining 1% at settlement.

If he's willing to pay 99% the greater, he's certainly willing just to pay 1%. You can be sure. On Good Friday, Andrew took us through Romans 5.

[5 : 50] We looked at this passage. God demonstrates his own love for us, demonstrates in the present tense, while we were sinners, Christ died for us in the past tense.

If you want to know if God is on your side today, just look back to the cross 2,000 years earlier. Our passage is about confidence.

Confidence that God loves us the way a father loves a child. But perhaps you're still worried about your sin, about that one thing you've done in your life.

Could my sin be ever so great that God decides to cut ties with me? And the answer is verse 33. Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?

It is God who justifies. The illustration is a courtroom. The prosecution has piles of paper on their desk. It's piles of paper which detail everything you've ever said and thought and done.

[6 : 53] There's a sealed section as well, full of the things that no one else knows about. And Satan stands up to accuse, because that's what he does best. But before his accusations leave his mouth, there's a word from the judge, justified.

It is God who justifies. You know, in a courtroom drama, when you're watching on telly and they say, have you reached a verdict? How do you find the defendant, V.J. Henderson, guilty or not guilty?

Justified. That is the verdict. Righteousified. As if that is a word. That is, as though I've lived the perfect life. That's how God finds me.

That's his verdict on the final day, if you're trusting in Jesus. Satan can say whatever he wants. His accusations might even be correct. But it's God's verdict that counts.

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It's an argument about greater to lesser. God has the authority. He rules the universe. He is the judge.

- [8 : 02] It's his opinion that counts. Everything else is a lesser voice. Our low self-esteem, our guilty conscience, the messaging of our culture, the lies of Satan.
- They're all lesser voices. One of the reasons I think Christians are nervous about God's love and unsure is because we listen to lesser voices.
- We let them drown out the greater. Verse 33. It is God who justifies. If you trust in Jesus, that is the unchangeable verdict he will deliver on your life on that final day.
- Because the tricky thing about the courtroom is this. We hear God's verdict and we match it up to our lives and we realize it doesn't equate.
- We're not perfect. We're unrighteous. We're sinful, not just. The idea that we are declared innocent seems to be a miscarriage of justice.
- [9 : 10] And so this is our fourth question. Verse 34. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.
- You see, Satan rises to speak, Your Honor, I'd like you to declare a mistrial. V.J. Henderson is not a just man. He's a great sinner.
- He's guilty by nature. You can't declare him free. But again, just a few words from the judge. Verse 34. Christ Jesus died.
- You see, Satan is right. I have broken God's laws. Death is the penalty I deserve. But Christ Jesus died in my place.
- It's not that God forgets about sin. It's not that he sweeps it away under the carpet. A crime has been committed. A punishment must be handed down.
- [10 : 13] It is legally watertight. But it's just that Christ Jesus has died in my place. You see, it's just that God loves us and wanted to save us.
- He's not just a God. He's my father. He loves me like a child. And so, who then is the one who is to condemn? No one.
- A death has occurred. Justice has been served. There's nothing left to charge me with or to charge you with because Christ Jesus has died.
- But more than that, verse 34, he was raised to life. This is about Easter Sunday. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.
- Jesus' resurrection proves that the cross was effective, that our sin was fully punished. You can put it like this. If the cross is Jesus paying for our sins, the resurrection proves that the check clears.
- [11 : 20] On the flip side, if Jesus wasn't raised to life, then his death didn't fully atone for all our sin. The resurrection proves that Jesus conquered death and therefore conquered all my sin.
- Death couldn't keep its prey. We just sung that a minute ago. By faith, I'm joined to Jesus in his death. But resurrection means I'm joined to his resurrection life as well.
- Jesus is alive. And that means nervous Christians have a second chance at relationship with God. A third chance, a fourth chance, a fifth chance at relationship because he's not dead.
- He is alive again. Chance at relationship, possible for people like us. You see, Good Friday gets a lot of emphasis, but the resurrection is the important thing.
- It is dependent on Easter Sunday. In fact, all of Christianity stands on whether Jesus was raised to life or not. Good Friday, Easter Sunday, they need to be held together.
- [12 : 31] And at this stage, our courtroom, in the courtroom, the prosecution's case is in a shambles. The last effort to condemn you concerns your future because it's all very well to have your past and present dealt with.

But what about tomorrow and the day after? What about all the sins you commit from now until you die? Verse 34, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

In other words, because Jesus is alive, every time we sin, there's Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father. You can't punish him for that, he says, or that, or that, and he points the Father back to his wounds, to the cross, which speaks powerfully of his death for me.

If he's willing to die for my sins, then he's willing to ever plead for me. And all of this should give the nervous Christian confidence.

Confidence that our sins are dealt with. Confidence that there's nothing left to charge you with. That they've been forgiven and atoned and paid for. That there's nothing now standing between us and God.

[13 : 54] The resurrection proves there's no further charge to answer. And if you think you don't deserve all of that, then I think that's exactly the point. This is entirely an act of grace on God's behalf.

The mind that conceived this is not the mind of a lawyer, although it's legally tight, but the mind of a father. A father who loves us.

A father who's gracious and compassionate and abounding in steadfast love. Who wants to have people in a new creation with him. Who's so on our side that he sent Jesus to take the punishment that we deserve.

John 3.16 It's perhaps the most famous passage in the Bible. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

In what universe would God ever give his only son to save criminals who rebelled against him? I have two sons. I'm not giving them up for any of you.

[15 : 05] But God so loved the world. And if you're sitting here today unsure about your relationship with God, we'd love you to become one of his children as well.

There's an idea in Melbourne and in the world that we're all God's children. But it's actually only true if you trust in Jesus. If you believe in the Son as your Lord and Saviour.

If you ask Jesus to die in your place you will be saved because he loves to forgive. He's happy to stand in your place and take the death that you deserve.

But if you're listening today and you take everything good that we've said and you see it that Easter is your free pass to keep sinning, I wonder whether you've really understood everything.

It's likely that you'll be in the courtroom of eternity alone having to deal with God yourself. For the Christians here today you can have total confidence that nothing will separate you from God's love.

[16 : 14] Yes, we'll fall short of obeying his word. We'll fall short when we compare ourselves to others. We do that all the time. We'll fall into habits or patterns of sin.

But there's Jesus forgiving us on the cross. There's Jesus alive again forever interceding and pleading on our behalf. And I hope that shows you how seriously God takes sin.

It means we should resolve to sin less. If a Christian is nervous about their sin I think at least it's a good sign that they're taking it seriously.

by the Spirit Jesus gives us strength to resist temptation. He prompts us to walk properly in Jesus' footsteps. But even when we fail we need to know that Jesus is alive.

That our sins have been fully paid. That he's forever interceding and pleading on our behalf. And so the point of this passage is confidence. A confidence.

[17 : 17] So we listen to God's voice not lesser voices of our culture or the devil. That we weigh our sin no matter how bad against the death and resurrection of Jesus.

He is alive. Your sins have really been paid for. There's nothing to separate you from God's love. Nothing to stop you getting to heaven. We don't have time today but the rest of the passage addresses the problem of suffering.

The question is whether my suffering could be a sign that God is not so happy with me. Verse 35 says Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger of sword as it is written for your sake we face death all day long. We're considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

Could my suffering be a sign that God doesn't love me so much but the answer is the same. No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

[18 : 23] It's an argument from greater to lesser. If God loves us in Jesus he will bring us through suffering to resurrection life and that is what you see at the resurrection.

He brings Jesus through suffering and into eternal life and glory. The final flourish is verse 38 and 39 just to finish.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor demons nor the present nor the future nor any powers nor neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen. Let's pray together. Father we thank you for the Lord Jesus for his death on Good Friday.

We thank you that Jesus is alive that our sins have really been paid for that in him we are justified. Thank you Father there is nothing that separates us from your love that we can enjoy resurrection life as well.

[19 : 39] We thank you for the Lord Jesus who in the courtroom of eternity would stand in our place. Thank you that he ever lives and pleads for people like us.

May we never get over what Easter means. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.