

# Christ Our Assurance

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[ 0 : 00 ] Heavenly Father, I thank you for this building. I thank you we have a place to come and worship you. I also thank you that we have the technology to worship, for people to come and worship with you online.

Father, I admit that this text that I just read encourages people. It may make people angry. It may make people feel discouraged or confused.

But whatever people are feeling, Lord, I just ask that you administer to our hearts, to our minds, that your Holy Spirit would be present and that we would just be focused on you.

Everything else, all distractions, would just fall away. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So over the holidays, me and my wife, we watch a lot on Netflix.

And there's a new movie that just came up. I believe it came out on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. And the movie's called Don't Look Up. And I'm just going to say I'm not here to promote it.

[ 1 : 09 ] I'm not here to say you should watch it. I'm just, you can decide that for yourself. But the premise of the movie, without giving any spoilers or anything of that away, is about, it's an end-of-the-world genre movie.

There's a big meteor, which you find out right away, is coming towards Earth to destroy it. And people are scrambling all over the world trying to figure out what to do. It's basically a modern version of the movie Armageddon that came out many years ago, just without the Aerosmith song in it.

And there's two prayers that I want to take from this movie that happened at some points in the movie. I don't want to give it away. And there's two of them.

So I'm just going to read them. I wrote them down, so I'll just read them out right now. So the first one. Dearest Father and Almighty Creator, We ask for your grace tonight, despite our pride.

Your forgiveness, despite our doubt. Most of all, Lord, we ask for your love to see us through these dark times. May we face whatever is to come in your divine will, with courage and open hearts of acceptance.

[ 2 : 27 ] Amen. And in the second prayer, I'll just say that the person who does pray this prayer in the movie, they are speaking in front of a camera, and they're addressing a nation.

So here it is. I've been noticing a lot of prayers recently for people during this time, and I commend that. But I also want to give a prayer for stuff.

There's dope stuff, like material stuff, like sick apartments, and watches, and cars, and clothes. And that could all go away. And I don't want to see that stuff go away.

So I'm going to say a prayer for that stuff. Amen. Now, there's quite a big stark contrast between these two prayers. But I bring these prayers up, I quote them, because the text we're looking at today, these prayers speak directly to that text.

The text brings to light what these prayers are about, and they do an excellent job. I'm not saying the characters within the movie do a good job at representing what they pray, but the texts do an excellent job.

[ 3 : 39 ] And in this text, the text talks about there's only two ways of life to live, and that's a life in the spirit or a life in the flesh. So if you haven't yet, turn to Romans 8, verses 1 to 11.

Please do so now. In just a brief context, Paul is writing to a heavily persecuted church.

This church is being persecuted by the Roman emperor. They're being martyred. They're being tortured. They're being ostracized, isolated. They're being forced to hide.

They're forced to not walk the streets. They have to do everything in hiding because they'll get killed. They'll get martyred. And earlier, Paul, in the book of Romans, he writes about basically what he says in summary.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and no one is capable of pleasing God. And then he gets to chapter 8. And some people have said that this chapter is the inner sanctuary within the cathedral of the Christian faith, the tree of life in the midst of the Garden of Eden, the highest peak in a range of mountains.

[ 4 : 57 ] I don't know how many people here have hiked a mountain, gotten to the top. But as you're cresting the mountain to the peak, your view is always disruptive.

You don't get a perfect view until you get to the very top because the ground is going up in front of you. And once you crest the mountain, there's a perfect view, a perfect 360 panorama view. And the only thing that obstructs your view, it would be other mountain peaks. But what people are saying for this chapter in the book of Romans is that it is the Everest of all mountains, the Everest of the book of Romans.

It's the highlight, the crescendo. So I'll begin in verse 1. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. Now I know I might have lost some view as soon as you hear the word law.

[ 6 : 04 ] Some of you might be thinking or saying to yourselves right now, oh, those Christians, all about the rules and missing out on life. They always have to talk about laws, things you must do differently, things you have to do like this.

You must bow or get up at that certain time. And that's a legitimate thing to think or say. I thought the same thing before becoming a Christian. But another way you could read this verse is by switching law to worldview.

And I'll just read it again with that in mind. For the worldview of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the worldview of sin and death.

And also when you hear the word law or read the word law in the Bible, it's speaking about the Mosaic law. And that was given to Israel in the book of Exodus for a time when they're right on the precipice of going through the threshold into the promised land that God has promised them all up until this point.

And he gives them a law, the way, it gives them a worldview and a way to live that's different from the people within the promised land. God gave them a way that they would be different, that they wouldn't become distracted by the gods within that land, wouldn't become distracted by the beliefs, by what they did.

[ 7 : 24 ] God wanted them to be a people focused on him. He wanted their hearts. The whole point of the law was for their hearts to be focused on him and not on the things surrounding.

He wanted them to delight in him for he is holy. He wanted his people to be holy. Now everyone has worldviews.

We can't deny that. Where your worldview is is where your heart is. And God loved his people so much he gave them something to help them. But the reaction, oh here, Christians are obsessed, always obsessed with rules and laws and missing out on life.

They never want people to have fun. It's very common. And if we're honest with ourselves, many of us who have put their faith and trust in Jesus probably think the same thing as well.

How many of us can truly say that if our world was totally destroyed, we would pray that first prayer that I read? I think many of us would pray the second.

[ 8 : 35 ] I think many of us would pray, but I also want to give a prayer for stuff. There's dope stuff, Lord. Like material stuff. Like sick apartments that I could get.

And watches and cars and clothes that I want to wear. And that could all go away if the world was to end. And I don't want to see that happen. We've all created identities for our lives that at first sign of destruction we would pray for the second prayer.

Many people, when the stock market crashed, put all their money, all their faith into that system. And then it crashed. And many of them, a lot of them took their lives because they were so, their whole identity in material wealth was gone, was lost.

They lost it in the blink of an eye. Or it could also be someone who has put all their focus on knowledge, on gaining knowledge, on studying.

And then they could have, maybe something happens to their mind or to their eyesight. And they become completely lost. And they don't know what to do with themselves anymore. See, everyone has an identity.

[ 9 : 50 ] Humanity is obsessed with self-gratification. And that's what this text is talking about here. It's bringing to light what it means. You can either live this life or that life. Humanity is obsessed with slogans.

Like, be true to yourself. My truth. Don't mess with my truth. See, humanity has been locked into this mindset, as the Bible says, since the beginning in Genesis.

Since it fell. And it's become so bad lately that if you have a different opinion or worldview from what the culture demands, it's called hate speech.

You get canceled. Or even saying you believe in science, you can face jail time or be called narrow-minded. But isn't that in itself narrow-mindedness?

And with all that in mind, we can read the next verses of what Paul writes. I'm just going to take a sip of water first. See, Paul writes about all that in the previous chapters.

[ 11 : 01 ] And then he gets to chapter 8. And in these next verses, he says, You see, when you read the word flesh, it seems kind of odd.

Like, why would Paul be writing about his skin? But what he actually means is when he says flesh, he's talking about a worldview, an orientation of the heart and the mind.

So that's what he's talking about. And then he talks about also in those verses that God, knowing that humans cannot save themselves from their selves, He sent his Son.

He sent his Son to walk among us, to be fully flesh, but fully God. And he dwelt among us, and he lived a perfect life. And then he took on the sin, the criminal's death that we deserved, and died on the cross, and then he rose again.

See, it required the ultimate sacrifice to be saved from ourselves. And it could only be done through the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And then, the issue, the law that I talked about earlier, the Mosaic Law, the issue that happened because the human heart is so corrupt that they tried to make it the ultimate, the ultimate thing for them to become saved, that they followed this rule, this rule, this rule, that they would be almost in a sense enlightened.

[ 12 : 43 ] But that's not the case. Because Christ came while we were still sinners and lost in ourselves. You see, it's by faith, not by works. It's for those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus will have eternal life.

Not those who have done this, this, and this will have eternal life. And the liberating work of the Spirit only takes place in the context of Christ's work.

And if we continue in verse 5, verse 6, verse 6, for those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.

But those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

[ 13 : 49 ] When an athlete... I'm losing my voice. When an athlete... When an athlete trains, they're oriented for a goal.

And that goal motivates all their actions that they do, following up to that goal they want to reach, whether it's an Olympic medal or a 5k race they want to run or something like that or a weight they want to lift.

Everything they do is oriented to it. And there's nothing wrong with Christian athletes. But when it comes down to it, it comes down to the identity.

Does the goal replace God? Are you living for your flesh or are you living for the Spirit? What is your mind thinking about? You see, those verses I just read, there's action words within those verses.

There's walk, live, and set. Now, some of you might be asking, what does that look like for a Christian? What does it look like for a Christian to live by the Spirit?

[ 14 : 58 ] Well, walk, that could be going to church, reading scripture, or volunteering within the church. When live, what does that look like? It could be an outward appearance. Do you talk about your faith with people, people who do not know the Lord?

Do you attend a small group? And then there's set the mind, and that is meditating on scripture, that is praying and worshiping God. And then when people walk in the flesh, it's the opposite of all what I just said.

You're living for yourself, that self-gratification, and that is what this text is talking about. And I acknowledge there could be people here who've been hurt by the church.

They've been hurt by people who, what other people say, are very holy, and they're confused by that. And I'm not going to defend them. But I will say one thing.

Jesus came for them, he came for you, and he came for me. See, the human heart has always been corrupt, and even though people have put their faith and trust in Christ, we still battle with the flesh.

[16:12] And in verse 9, Paul writes, you, however, are not in the flesh, but in the spirit. If, in fact, the spirit of God dwells in you, anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through the spirit who dwells in you. See, when you put your faith and trust in Jesus, you're given the spirit that dwells within you. It gives you assurance. It gives you assurance that what you have was given to you, and it will not be taken from you.

And without the spirit, you're lost. There's nothing that can guide you. There's nothing that motivates you because the heart, until Jesus returns, will always be battling against itself, battling against the flesh.

Now, some of you might be saying, whether you're online or in person, you might be saying, so what? How can you believe in this stuff? How can you believe in the spirit? Angels are a God. The only thing I can say is give my personal testimony, a brief thing of it.

[17:34] I believe in a created world and that humanity in its pride sinned against God and became cursed. But God knew it couldn't save itself from itself. So he lovingly sent his only son to become sin and die a death we deserve.

And Jesus rose from the dead and is glorified. And those who put their faith and trust in Jesus will have eternal life. The spirit is given to believers to guide, convict, and comfort them in times of need and despair.

See, my life was so different before I came to faith. And I still struggle with things from my past. But I can't deny something happened to me to draw me to Christ.

It was not my own doing. Regardless of what people with science backgrounds, psychology backgrounds, atheistic backgrounds, and other religious backgrounds may say. When I was 18, I walked into a church as someone so angry at the world.

I wanted to die. I was addicted to drugs, heading either back to jail or into a self-inflicted overdose. And two hours later, I came out as someone completely different.

[18:46] My anger, my addictions, my worldview, my shame, was completely changed. Now, some may say I experienced a chemical change in my brain that can be explained like that, or I was brainwashed.

But all I can say is how can you deny or explain the millions of changed lives that have lived through the centuries over one fact.

All these lives that are changed. Myself, you could be sitting here, your life has changed over one fact. And that is that Jesus rose from the dead. People have been martyred.

They've gone to jail over that one fact. And I know there's also people here who have never had that conversion moment. They've always just known that Jesus is their Lord.

And that is a beautiful thing. You should cherish it. But the Spirit was given for the reason of assurance. You see, when the Spirit is within you, dwells with you, he helps guide you to walk, to live, and to set your mind to think about Jesus and God, to live a life that is holy to God.

[20:00] You see, Paul, leading up to this verse, in chapter 7, he's writing about his struggle with his flesh. He wants to do this, but he's constantly doing this.

He wants to do that, he's constantly doing that. He is so conflicted, he cries out, wretched man that I am. He is so conflicted. And then, he writes in verse 1, chapter 8, There is therefore now no condemnation There is therefore now no condemnation for those who struggle with greed, with lust, with doubt, with addiction, with shame, with envy, with jealousy, with regret.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Because that is a free gift given to those who have put their faith and trust in Christ. The Spirit is within you.

You have that assurance, regardless of what you're going through, regardless of what you've done. There is always that assurance. And you see, in verse 11, it talks about the end times.

It talks about the end. You see, you can either have eternal life or you can be lost in yourself. God will just give you up to your desires. But this is the new year.

[ 21 : 33 ] People make resolutions around this time. If you are here and you do not believe in Jesus, you're skeptical. You struggle with that idea. I would encourage you this year to set a resolution for one year to explore Christianity.

Read good books on it. Talk to people who know what they're talking about. Take a course on it. And if you are here and Jesus is, in fact, your Lord and Savior, rest in the assurance of Christ's work.

It is finished. The Spirit is within you. And you can pray this prayer that John Newton prayed. Teach me to live by faith.

Conform my will to thine. Let me be victorious in death and then in glory shine. You see, the Bible has such a magnificent promise that Christ came for humanity.

For God so loved the world that he sent his only Son, for that all who believe in him will have eternal life. Rest in Jesus. Let us pray.

[ 22 : 41 ] Heavenly Father, as I said earlier, this text can bring people to anger, can bring people to despair, can bring people to joy.

And I just ask, Lord, right now that your Spirit would just minister to our hearts and minds. Help us, Lord. Convict us where we need convicting.

Give us encouragement where we need encouragement. And I just pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.