

God's Love and Our Assurance Pt 2

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 April 2022

Preacher: Vijay Henderson

[0 : 0 0] I don't know about you, I love a good courtroom drama. The other night, my wife Rachel and I were watching A Few Good Men. I don't know if you've seen it, but it's basically Tom Cruise and Jack Nicholson battling it out in the courtroom.

It's got lots of great lines like, I want the truth, you can't handle the truth. It's pretty intense sort of stuff. Have you ever been to court? Have you ever been on trial for anything?

In the last couple of years, I've had to go to court twice. I didn't do anything wrong, but two of my friends had, and so I offered to go with them so they wouldn't feel alone.

One of them was for a driving misdemeanor, but the other was for something much more serious. They were both open and shut cases, however, because their guilt was never in question.

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

[1 : 0 4] What happens if their lawyer was just the only one that they could afford, and so not as good as the prosecution? My friends were so nervous that we had to sit there and just pray and pray and pray for a lenient sentence.

Our passage today, which Kate read in Romans, that is about a Christian who's also a nervous wreck. They're a nervous wreck because of their sin.

Just in case you don't know, sin is the crime of rebelling against God. We sin in the way that we disobey his word and set ourselves up in his place.

And that means we're all guilty sinners. It means that we too could be the nervous Christian on trial in the courtroom, because at some stage, Christians will all feel nervous about the state of their sin.

Unsure whether we've gone too far with God despite our many confessions of forgiveness. Unsure whether God really loves us, whether we'll really get to heaven because of the things that we've done.

[2 : 1 3] 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.

So there's a judge, which is God. There's a defendant, that's you. There's a prosecution, which is your guilty conscience, the people who know you, and of course, Satan.

They've read out the charges. The charges are that you are a great sinner. Five questions designed to give you total confidence that nothing, not your sin, not even your suffering, will separate you from God's love.

Nothing will stop you getting to heaven. And so first question, 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, you end up with who can be against us. And to that, there are lots of answers.

[3 : 19] There are lots of voices, lots of people you could line up who might stand against you. And the scary thing is that many of their accusations are correct. If we listen to Satan's voice or the voices around us, we might struggle to believe whether God really loves us.

But in the verse, it's very different when you add the first part back in again. 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 could be against us. And in the New Testament, one of the big ideas you find is that God is our father.

And so whoever stands against you, God is my dad. And my dad is greater than them. It's like this picture on the screen. Please, guys, at the back.

It's a famous photo. John F. Kennedy, you know, he's doing sort of presidential things, just pointing, making things happen. But obviously, the main bit of the photo is little John Jr.

[4 : 27] using the desk like a cubby house. If you're the son of a president, then not even the might of Cold War Russia could stand against you.

You're free to play around like that without a care in the world. How much more the children of God? If he is for us, who could be against us? It's an argument from greater to lesser.

And if that sounds too good to be true, the second question shows how you can know it for sure. Look at verse 32. He who does 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?

Again, it's greater to lesser. If God took the most precious thing he had, his son Jesus, and gave him up for us all, why would he not give us heaven as well?

It's like God is buying you a house, but he's already paid 99% of the deposit. You can be sure that he'll also come in and pay that 1%.

[5 : 30] It's greater to lesser. If he can pay 99%, he can certainly pay 1%. On Good Friday, Andrew took us through Romans 5. The key verse was verse 8, chapter 5, sorry, verse 8.

God demonstrates his own love for us, demonstrates, present tense, Christ died for us in the past. If you want to know if God loves you today, look back to the cross 2,000 years ago.

Our passage is about confidence. Confidence that God loves us like a father loves their child. But perhaps you're worried about your sin. Perhaps you picture that one sin that has never really left you in terms of feeling shame and guilt.

That one sin, and you think, that is too far, and that God can't love me. Well, the answer to that is verse 33. Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?

It is God who justifies. The picture is a courtroom. The prosecution, they've got piles of paper on their desk. It's full of everything you've ever said and thought and done.

[6 : 45] There's a sealed section as well. A sealed section with that one sin that no one else knows about. Only God. And Satan, he stands up to accuse you, because that's what he does best.

But before the words leave his mouth, a word comes back from the judge. It is God who justifies. You know the courtroom dramas when you're watching on TV?

Have you reached a verdict? How do you find the defendant, V.J. Henderson? Guilty or not guilty? Justified. That is the verdict. Righteousified, if that is even a word.

That is righteous, as though I had lived the perfect life. That is how God finds me. And that is his verdict on the final day, if you're trusting in Jesus now.

Satan can say whatever he wants. His accusations might even be true. But it's God's verdict that counts. Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?

[7 : 48] It's an argument about greater to lesser. God has the authority. It's his opinion that counts at the end of the day. Everything else is a lesser voice.

Whether it's our low self-esteem, our guilty conscience, the messaging from our culture, or the lies of Satan. You see, I think part of the reason that Christians doubt God's love is because we listen to lesser voices.

We let them drown out the greater voice. Verse 33, that we are justified. If you trust in Jesus today, that is the unchangeable verdict that he will deliver on your life on the final day.

But the tricky thing about the courtroom is this, that God's verdict doesn't always add up to what we see in the mirror.

Because we're not just, are we? We're sinful. We're not perfect. We're unrighteous. The idea that we could be set free seems to be a miscarriage of justice.

[8 : 55] And so this is our fourth point. 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. VJ Henderson is not innocent.

He's a great sinner. He's guilty by nature. You cannot declare him just. But again, just a short word 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. And it's not that God forgets sins. It's not that he sweeps them under the carpet.

[9 : 52] A crime has been committed. A punishment must be handed down. It's legally watertight. It's just that Jesus dies in my place.

You see, it's just that God loves me. He wants to save me. He wants me to get to heaven. He's not just a God.

He's my father. And he's your father too. And so then, who is the one who is to condemn? No one. A death has occurred on my behalf.

Justice has been served. There's nothing left to charge you with. Why? Because Christ Jesus died. He died already. Verse 34.

More than that was raised to life. This is the main event today. This is about Easter Sunday. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

[10 : 49] The resurrection proves that the cross was effective. Resurrection proves that our sin was fully punished. You could put it like this.

If the cross is Jesus paying for our sin, the resurrection proves that the check clears. On the flip side, if Jesus stayed dead on Easter Sunday, you could say that his death did not fully atone for all our sin.

The resurrection proves that he conquers death, which means he conquers my sin. By faith, I'm joined to Jesus in his death. But I'm also united in resurrection life, which means my future is secured.

Heaven is heading my way. Jesus is alive. And that means sinners get a second chance with God and a third chance and a fourth chance and a fifth chance and a one millionth chance.

His resurrection proves that he's really conquered sin. Even our passage, three of the five questions are about death. But without the resurrection, they're futile.

[12 : 03] And Jesus died for nothing. You see, Good Friday gets all the emphasis, but it's dependent on Easter Sunday. In fact, all of Christianity stands on whether Jesus really rose from the dead bodily or whether he stayed in the ground.

Good Friday, Easter Sunday, they need to be held together. And at this stage in our courtroom, the prosecution is in shambles. Their last effort to condemn you revolves around your future.

You see, it's all very well to have your past and present and that one big sin dealt with. But what about tomorrow and the next day and the next day? All the sins until the day you die. What happens with your future?

And the answer is verse 34 again. More than that, who was raised to life. Jesus is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

In other words, every time we sin until we die, there's Jesus saying, Father, you can't punish Vijay for that or that or that or that or that every day until I die.

[13 : 11] And he points the father to his wounds, to wounds which speak powerfully of his death for us. Pretty soon we'll sing this, that he looks on Jesus and pardons me.

And that is correct. If he's willing to die for my sins, then he's willing to ever plead for me on my behalf. And all of this gives the Christian confidence.

It's about confidence. Confidence, confidence that our sins have been dealt with. Not that they've disappeared, but that they're forgiven and atoned for and dealt with. So they can never again come back to separate us from God's love or get in the way of us reaching heaven.

The resurrection proves there's no further charge for you to answer. And if you think that all of that sounds too good to be true, then that is the right idea.

We don't deserve this. It's entirely an act of God's grace. The mind that conceived this was not the mind of a lawyer, but the mind of a father.

[14 : 23] The father who loves us, who is gracious and compassionate, abounding in steadfast love and slow to anger. A father who wants to have people with him in the new creation.

A father who's so on our side that he sent his son to take the punishment that I and you deserve. John 3.16, 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 a God ever give his only son to save guilty criminals who rebelled against him? I have two sons.

I'm not giving them up for any of you. 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 too.

[15 : 28] There's an idea in our culture that we're all God's children, but I don't think that's actually correct. You're only a child if you believe in the son as your Lord and Savior.

If you ask Jesus to die in your place, you will be saved because he loves to forgive. He'll gladly step into the courtroom when the sentence is handed down and stand between you and God.

He'll happily take your place. But if you're listening today and you take everything good that we've said and you think that Easter is your free pass to keep on sinning, then I'm not sure you've really understood anything.

And I think that you'll be alone in that courtroom of eternity. For the Christians here today, the application is confidence. Nothing will separate you from God's love.

We will fall short of obeying him. We'll fall short when we compare ourselves to others. We always do that, don't we? We'll fall into patterns or habits of sin.

[16 : 35] But there's Jesus on the cross forgiving us. There's Jesus ever living and pleading, interceding 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 a nervous wreck about their sin, actually, I think that's not a bad thing. It shows that they're taking it seriously.

By the Spirit, Jesus enables us to resist temptation. The Spirit prompts us which path would be following him rightly.

But even when we fail, it is dealt with. Because Jesus died and is alive again. And so the point of the passage is confidence.

It's pretty clear, isn't it? Our confidence that we would listen to God's verdict, not lesser voices. That we weigh our sin, even the worst things we've done, against the death and resurrection of Jesus.

[17 : 36] That we keep rehearsing this courtroom out. Keep preaching to ourselves that final verdict justified. Because Christ Jesus died and rose again.

Keep preaching until you're confident that nothing will separate you from God's love. Nothing will stop you getting to heaven. We don't have time today.

The rest of the passage addresses the idea of suffering. The question is, is my suffering a sign that God is not so happy with me?

We don't have time today. But verse 35, it says, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall troubles or hardships or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or 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 is not happy with me?

[18 : 33] The answer is the same. No, verse 37. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loves us. An argument from greater to lesser.

If God loves us, he will bring us through suffering. Bring us to eternal glory. Because that's what he did for Jesus. Brought Jesus through the suffering of the cross.

Rising to new life. To eternal glory as well. Just a final flourish to finish. Verse 38. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor demons, nor the present nor the future, nor any powers, 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. Amen. Let me pray. Father God, thank you for the cross. Thank you for Easter. Father, thank you for the Lord Jesus who takes the punishment we deserve.

And thank you that he is alive. That he is risen indeed. That his resurrection proves that all our sin, even the worst things we've done, have been fully paid for.

[19 : 47] Thank you that he is alive and at your right hands, forever living, forever pleading on our behalf. Thank you that through the resurrection, he points us back to how effective his death was for us.

Please, Father, help us to know this. Help us to not be a nervous wreck as though you're unhappy with us or as though you don't love us.

Please, Father, keep us preaching this to ourselves as long as we live until we see you and the Lord Jesus in glory. And we ask it in his name.

Amen.