

Eternal security

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[0 : 00] Security is big business in our country, isn't it? I'm sure you haven't gone through this week without seeing some kind of private security officer.

Maybe they helped you. There are more than 7,500 private security companies operating in South Africa today. It's a huge industry. And that doesn't include the many more people who provide security products like electric fences and alarms.

Even our president deemed it necessary to spend over 200 million rand in security upgrades for his home in Nkandla. Now most of us can't afford that kind of security.

But we all have some kind of security. We all have burglar bars or a door that can lock at least.

Because everybody needs security in an insecure world, don't they?

And not just security from criminals, but financial security. People bend over backwards to ensure they get a decent pension one day.

[1 : 04] So that they have security in their old age. You know, we take out insurance and medical aids to insure ourselves against unforeseen expenses. Everybody's working hard to get some kind of security in life.

Whether it be security now or security for our retirement, wherever it is. We care a lot about getting security for our life on earth. The question is, how much do we care about our security for the life to come?

Do we put nearly as much effort into getting security for the life to come as we do in getting security for this life? I don't think so. You see, because just as our physical life is under threat by all sorts of threats and dangers and criminals and wars and poverty and whatever it might be, financial insecurity.

Just as our physical life is under threat, our eternal life is under serious threat. Not just from our spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil. But primarily from the sin that resides inside all of us.

You see, we've all broken relationship with our creator as human beings. We've broken his laws. We looked at his ten commandments earlier. And by looking at that, if we're honest with ourselves, we must admit we've all broken that.

[2 : 17] We've all gone against the way that our creator has called us to live. We've sinned. And so our eternal security is under threat. Many people don't know what's going to happen to them when they die.

Now, religion in general tries to make up for that by attempting to offer you some kind of eternal security. You see, religions in the world are in the business of eternal security.

They're the eternal security industry, if you like. Whether it's Islam giving you rules to follow to get to paradise. Or Buddhism showing you the path to Nirvana. Or atheism saying that, well, you don't need to worry because there's no eternity anywhere.

Which is really just another form of eternal security for people, isn't it? But the thing is, whatever it is, whatever you believe, and you do believe something about eternity. You have to. How do you know it's right?

Can you really be sure of where you're going when you die? Can you really be sure? Because at the end of the day, there's really no more important question that you could ask yourself. Where am I going? Am I sure where I'm going?

[3 : 23] Or am I not? Well, here at the end of the Apostle Paul's letter to the first century Christians in Rome, he answers that question.

Because they, like anybody else, would have wondered. Even though they were Christians, they would have wondered, is my eternity secure? Do I have eternal security? How do I know that I

haven't got this all wrong?

And that the Apostle Paul is just making this up? How do I really know? Maybe you've asked that question. Maybe you've thought that. Maybe you're a Christian who's struggling with assurance. Do I really know where I'm going? Am I really saved? Or maybe you're not a Christian and you don't even know where to start looking for assurance. You don't even know if there's such a thing as having real assurance.

Well, I think it will help you to read what Paul writes here in the closing paragraph of Romans. Because he starts by praising God, saying this. Look what he says. He says, Now to him who is able to establish you.

[4 : 24] To him who is able to establish you. You know what that means? Establish you? It means to make you secure. Really secure. To give you assurance of where you're going one day when you die.

Not just wishful thinking or religious optimism. Well, I hope it'll turn out okay. But real solid assurance. Don't you want that? If that's available. If it's possible to be truly eternally secure. Don't you want that? Who wouldn't want that? Well, apparently it is possible. And God is able to give it to you. God is able to give you real eternal security.

God is able to establish you. So how does he do that? Well, the same verse goes on to tell us. Look what it says. Verse 25. Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel. The message I proclaim about Jesus Christ. That is how God establishes people with eternal security. Through a message.

[5 : 25] In particular, the message about his son, Jesus Christ. If you understand that message, it can establish you with real eternal security. So how does it do that?

What is it about this message that can really establish you? Well, there's four things that I want us to see about this message. That can give you real eternal security.

And the first thing is that this message tells you how God deals with your sin. Now, despite what different religions might tell you, there's really only one way for human sin to be dealt with.

And that is death. Sorry to say, but death is the only way sins against God can really be dealt with.

A rule that's been built into the fabric of God's universe is that the wages of sin is death.

Jesus Christ himself said that. It is the price that sin demands. But you see, death is not actually meant to be. We all think, well, because we all die, death must be natural.

[6 : 25] It's just the way of things. No. Death is not actually natural. It's not meant to be. It came into our world because of sin. You see, when we don't live the way our Creator intends, there's really no reason for Him to keep us around, is there?

Think about that. God doesn't exist for us. We exist for Him. And if we are not living according to His will, then there's really no reason for us to exist. There's really no reason for God to keep us around. In fact, we should die the moment we sin against God. And yet God still keeps us around. Even after we've sinned, which is strange. We take it for granted, but it's very strange if you think about it. That we would sin against the holy, awesome Creator of the universe. That we would rebel against what He wants in our lives. That we wouldn't give it a thought. And we would chase after our own puny little goals.

And He keeps us alive. Why should He? And not only that, but when we look at our Bibles and we read back in the Old Testament, we discover that He even made a way that people who sinned could substitute animals to die in their place so that they don't have to die.

[7 : 33] Now, why would God do that? Have you ever thought? Why would God make a system where people who have sinned against Him can stay alive? Why? It's always been a bit of a mystery.

Well, it's a mystery that we learn in this passage that has now been uncovered. Have a look at the verse. The message I proclaim about Jesus Christ in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed.

And so what this is saying is that the message about Jesus Christ explains the mystery of why God has kept us alive, even though we've sinned against Him. And why He commanded all those animal sacrifices in the Old Testament.

And the reason is because God always wanted to make a permanent way for those sins to be paid for so that we don't have to pay for them. That was always God's plan.

And that became clear only really when Jesus came to earth, didn't it? When He came as a sinless human and He became the ultimate sacrifice, the sacrifice that all those animal sacrifices were pointing towards, because He died on the cross for the sins of other humans.

[8 : 43] And then, suddenly, it all made sense. We realized what God's plan was to deal with sin. But, you see, before Jesus came, nobody really knew that was God's plan.

Of course, they had foreshadows of it, and the prophets and stuff had hinted at it, but nobody really knew that's what God was going to do, send His Son to die for the sins of other humans so that we can live, and we can have eternal life.

And so, before Jesus came, the only way people assumed to compensate for their sins was through good works, through religious effort.

They thought, well, the reason I'm still alive, the reason that God keeps me alive is because I'm a good guy, because I'm pretty decent, because I do good things. And people still think that today. In fact, that's a hugely prevalent thought in society today. Well, the reason that I'm not punished by God is because I'm a decent person. And that was the same as in the Old Testament.

[9 : 43] The Jews fell into that trap, and they hoped that it would be enough. But, you see, they never really knew that it would. They never really had security that it would. Because if you trust in your own good deeds to get right with God, then you never really know whether you've done enough, do you?

It's only when Jesus came and died that we discovered, for the first time, that God never intended for us to pay for our sins. Because the truth is, no amount of good deeds can pay for our sins, our multitude of sins that we've committed in thought, word, and deed against a most holy and perfect God.

No amount of little good deeds in our life could ever pay for that. In the Gospel, you see, we discover that God kept us around because He intended to pay that price Himself.

And that is the first way that He gives people assurance. You see? Because all of a sudden, our eternal security is no longer based on something that we do like we thought, but on something that He did.

And it totally changes everything, because we no longer have to wonder whether we've done enough. We can stop wondering, have I done enough? Am I good enough? No. It's not to do with how good I am.

[10 : 53] It's to do with how good Jesus is. And Jesus is the Son of God. God, He is perfectly good. And He did enough for you if you trust in Him. So that you can have assurance that nobody else can have outside of Jesus Christ.

But how do we know it's true? You know, it's a nice thought, isn't it, if we get it? But how do we really know it's true?

Because the Bible tells us? Well, how do we know the Bible is true? And that this wasn't all just made up by Jesus' followers? Have you ever wondered that to yourself? I mean, we come here on the assumption to church that the Bible is true, but how do we know?

Well, that brings us to the next way that God gives us assurance that Paul mentions here. And he does that by giving us the message of Jesus through prophets hundreds of years before He came. Look at what Paul writes in verse 25. The message I proclaim about Jesus Christ in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings.

[12 : 00] And so here we're reminded that Jesus didn't just come out of the blue into human history and just appear to a few people whose word we've got to take that He did what He did and He said what He said.

No, His life and His message was written about way before He set foot on earth. We've got thousands of years of prophecies in the Old Testament that are right here in your Bible in front of you that you can read now today that anticipate the coming of Jesus.

It's written centuries before He even came. Hundreds of these fulfilled prophecies, some even about the fine details of His life, like what the soldiers who were crucifying Him were going to be doing while He was dying.

Like little details, what they were going to give Jesus to drink was prophesied hundreds of years before He came. But also prophecies that tell us why He was coming and how He fits into God's plan and what God's plan is throughout the ages to ensure that when He came we would already

have documentary evidence of who He is and what He's come to do.

You see, and that is a feature of the Bible that is shared by not any other religious text or so-called religious text or holy text. No other books in any other religion or the text that they base their religion on comes close to the Bible in terms of these fulfilled prophecies and this evidence that we've got right in front of us.

[13:28] Because truth is, anybody can make up something about God. Anybody can come up with something, write it down and say it's from God. You know, I could write something down today.

I could say, you know, God commands everybody wears silly hats to church and say, oh, you know, this is God's Word. Who's going to refute me? I'm a pastor. I say it's God's Word. It must be.

No. Anybody could do that. And lots of people do. We've got lots of charlatans in our world and throughout history who have written stuff down and said, well, this is from God. But how do we know? Anybody can make it up.

But you know what you can't make up? You can't make up one unified message progressively revealed over thousands of years through 40 different authors, most of whom never met each other. But they're all saying the same thing, including prophets who accurately determine events to come. You can't fabricate that. You can't make that stuff up. So these prophets in the Bible's Old Testament, Isaiah, Malachi, Jeremiah, and others, they're the courtroom witnesses who are presenting different testimonies that all line up to verify that what Jesus and his apostles said is in fact true.

[14:37] And that it's all part of God's plan from the beginning of time so that we don't have to doubt what we read in Scripture. You see, it doesn't take long. When you really study the Bible and you get into it, it doesn't take long to realize that this is no ordinary book.

The people who are skeptical about the Bible are normally the people who have never read it. And so that's the second way that God gives people real assurance about what is true.

He reveals it to us in a way that is verified, a way that is believable. Because he reveals it through these prophets, centuries before Jesus even came. But then there's a third aspect of this message about Jesus that gives us assurance.

And that is that this message is for everyone. Look at verse 26. But now this message is revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God so that all the Gentiles might come.

All the Gentiles. Now the word for Gentiles here is just the word for nations. It's the same original word. And so this is saying that God revealed this message of his son, Jesus, in a way that applies to all nations, to all types of people everywhere around the world.

[15:50] It's not a message just for a particular group of people or a particular type of people or just for, you know, religious or spiritual people. No, it's for everyone. It's not just for a particular race of people like the Jews thought in their day.

No, it's for every race, every creed, every culture. You see, this message was always meant for everyone. And it had to be, if you think about it, because if Jesus is the only way that human sins can really be dealt with, then every human needs to hear about him.

Irrespective of whether they're interested or not. Irrespective of whether they come from an Islamic culture or a Buddhist culture or a Western culture. It doesn't matter. They're human beings. They've sinned and they need to hear the only one way that their sins can be dealt with without them having to deal with their sins themselves.

Every human needs to hear about him. And that's what God always intended. God always planned for this message to reach every corner of the world.

And that's why Jesus came in the time of history that he did. You see, when Jesus appeared, already with thousands of years of prophetic witness anticipating him. It was a time in history where there was one major language where almost everyone knew, which was Greek.

[17:08] Where the road and the communication infrastructures were the best they've ever seen. Where there was one major empire, the Romans, who controlled most of the known world. Like you'll see on this map behind me.

And that meant there were no closed borders. And amongst all that area, there was one language. There was one road infrastructure. Do you know there was no leaving the EU back then? And this is important.

This was an age before the expansion of civilization overseas. Which is very important. Because the world at this exact time was perfectly set for God's message to come. To be disseminated into the seat of human civilization.

And then over the next few centuries to be taken into all corners of the world. As civilizations spread across the oceans. Which God hadn't really allowed them to do before they had this message to take with them.

You see, the history of this world is not random. It's directed by a God who has a message to tell all human beings. A message of eternal security through his son Jesus.

[18:13] And he has set up history. And sent his son into history at the particular time when it was set. So that everybody would eventually hear this message.

Where this message would start in Jerusalem and would spread to all the corners of the world. You can find a church in any place you go. Even the most persecuted places.

Even in Somalia you'll find underground churches. Even in Syria you'll find churches. In Japan. On far away, far flung islands in the Pacific Ocean. Even in Plumstead.

You see, God wants this message to go out to all people. To all cultures. Because everybody needs to hear it. Even the person in the cubicle across from you in the office needs to hear this message. They need eternal security whether they want it or not. They need it. The random person on the train next to you needs eternal security whether they know they do or not.

[19:17] And the only way they can have eternal security, real eternal security, is through the message about Jesus. And God wants them to hear that message. And maybe you are the person who's meant to tell it to them.

And then there's one final way that the message of Jesus gives us eternal security. And that is that it changes how you live. And that's the real convincer that it's true.

Any message. Any religious kind of message. If it really changes from the inside out how you live and who you are. Then we know that it's not just made up.

It's not just man's message. But it's God's. Because it's a message. This message is a message that when people believe it. It transforms them in a way nothing else can.

Look at verse 26 again. I want to show you something else that Paul mentions here. But I'll read it again though. Now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God.

[20:18] So that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith. Now this is very important. He doesn't just say that all the Gentiles might come to faith. Importantly he says all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith.

You see God didn't just reveal this message so that we might believe it. And carry on our ordinary lives and pursue our careers. And you know do what we would have done otherwise.

But that we might come to the obedience that comes from believing it. You see God is busy building an eternal kingdom right now. Which is going to be the world to come.

He is busy preparing a new world for humanity. A world with no sin. This is another thing that he tells us through the prophets by the way. No sin, no pain, no death, no fighting.

Where everybody perfectly obeys God's law. Which is good and holy. And everybody perfectly loves their neighbor. And everybody enjoys the pleasures that God created them for forever.

[21:23] It's the world that we all actually long for, isn't it? And that's the world that God is busy creating. But you know for us to be fit for that world. God must first change us, mustn't he?

Because if he doesn't change us. Then the new world will just be the same as the old world. With wars and crime and greed. God must first change us before we can go there.

And the way that he chooses to change people. To be fit for that new world. Is not through coercion or threat. You know, you better keep these laws or else.

No. Because that never really worked anyway. And we see that also in our Bible. Through the history of people's relationship with God. No matter what laws we keep.

What boxes we tick. No matter how many times we come to church. We're still sinners at heart. See, the way God transforms people.

[22:20] Is by changing those hearts. And he does that through the message of Jesus Christ.

That's how he changes people's hearts. When people come to realize, really realize what God has done.

In giving himself to pay for our sins. So that we can have eternal security. Despite our sins. Totally by grace. It's when someone discovers that. Something changes inside.

A light switch goes on. And it's at that moment. The Bible says they are given a new heart. A renewed heart. And a renewed mind. A new heart that doesn't want to sin anymore.

A new heart that loves God. And desires God. And loves God's law. And a heart that out of love and gratitude.

Wants to please God. And wants to serve God. And wants to put their all into God's service. And God's work. Not out of duty or coercion. But out of love and gratitude.

[23 : 18] Because of a new heart. That is what Christian conversion is. It's a new heart. A change of heart. Which can only happen by hearing. And truly believing the message about Jesus Christ.

And that's what it means. To have the obedience that comes from faith. Not just faith. That's not what God's looking for. Just for you to say I believe. And say the Apostles Creed. God is looking for the obedience that comes from faith.

A changed heart. A whole hearted devotion to him. Note it's not faith that comes from obedience. This is important. It's not believing that you're eternally secure.

Because you're obedient. No. It's being obedient. Because you already know that you're eternally secure. Knowing that you're already a member of God's kingdom.

Which changes your life. And so you want to live a kingdom shaped life. Seeking first God's kingdom and will above all other things. You live that way because of faith. Which means.

[24 : 14] If you're not living as a member of God's kingdom. Then it's because you probably don't believe that you are one. You see the point? This obedience comes from believing who you truly are.

When you put your faith in Christ. And so I close this morning by asking you. Do you have eternal security? Really as a pastor. That's probably the most important question I could ever ask you. Do you really have eternal security? Do you know where you're going? Really know where you're going one day when you die? Because sorry to spoil your Sunday morning. You're going to die one day.

We all die. Ten out of ten people die. It's the ultimate statistic. You've got to be ready for that. Are you? It's the most important question.

Anybody could ask you. And I'm asking you now. Do you know where you're going when you die? I don't care how long you've come to church. I don't care how long you've been a member of this church. I don't even care if you pray every day.

[25 : 15] What I care about is whether you really know where you're going when you die. Well God wants you to know. God wants to establish you. And he is able to establish you.

He is able to give you that eternal security. Through the message about Jesus Christ. God has done everything to make sure you can know for sure where you're going in eternity. And you will know. You will know.

Where you're going by how you respond to this message. You can respond in faith and obedience. Which means that your sins have been dealt with and you're going to heaven.

Or you can respond with indifference. Which means that your sins have not been dealt with. And you have to face the punishment of hell. Where are you going when you die?

If you're still not sure. If you're sitting here and you actually honestly really don't know. Please come to me. I've got a little booklet I'd like to give you to read.

[26 : 15] You can just come get it for me. No questions asked. Free of charge. To know how you can have assurance through Jesus. And don't delay. You know. Don't say. Okay. Well. You know. I don't want to come this morning.

I'll come in two weeks time. You might not be around in two weeks time. Life is uncertain. Listen. Don't waste today. But if you are sure.

Of where you're going. If you believe the message of Jesus. And you've responded in faith and obedience to that. Then. Follow Paul's example. In giving glory to God.

That's how he closes this letter. After everything he's explained. After all the glories of the gospel. And what God has done for us. That we can have eternal assurance. Paul closes this letter. Praising God. In glory to God. Just opening his heart. In absolute praise to God. And so let us follow that example. In our daily life. Looking. In all of our life.

[27 : 11] To give glory to God. In response to what he's done. For us. Now to him who is able to establish you. To the only wise God. Be glory forever. Through Jesus Christ.

Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Yes Lord. In this uncertain world. We are so grateful that you can establish us.

With eternal security through. The message of your son Jesus Christ. We pray that you would do that. We pray that you would establish us. So that we know where we're going one day.

So that we would live out. Being members of your kingdom. That we would put aside earthly goals. and we pursue your goals in our lives. And we pray, Lord, that we would be bold to take this message of eternal security out to these thousands of people who live in our community, who don't know it, who don't have that security.

Give us boldness. Give us a desire for your glory, that we don't fear what people think of us, so that we will go out in faith and we will share this message with all we come across.

[28 : 17] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.