

Pastor T.C. Arnold
New Year's Eve
Galatians 4:1-7
Dec. 31st, 2016

In Galatians chapter 4, our text for today, we hear how the Holy Spirit assures us that we are God's children, redeemed by Jesus Christ. So confident is the assurance that we called our God – Father... an intimate, family title to show how we belong to Him and he belongs to us. This is assured! We have assurance.

What sounds the same but is not as good is insurance. Insurance is something kept for a time when something goes wrong. Insurance protects us and others when accidents happen... when failures take place and replacements need to be brought in. Insurance is peace of mind in case something bad occurs. And it is good to have insurance... but that's not as good as assurance.

Some like to treat their faith like insurance rather than assurance. When faith is insurance then we imagine that we can go about life the way we want – even if it's reckless. We do whatever, even break God's law – live in sin – ignore the Lord's will for your life because, after all, everything will be okay in the end... because I have insurance. I still have Jesus there at the end of my life. I believe that He died for me. So, at the last minute, I can repent of all the evil I have done – all the missteps that I have made and get right with God in the end. I can go about life in the way that makes me most happy, even when others are hurt, even when it's against God's will. I can do what I want and the devil can't touch me. My faith is my insurance. When I wreck my life, Jesus will bail me out. When I wreck the life of someone else, Jesus will forgive me. Faith as insurance is great because that means church doesn't really matter. What we do here is just for special times – not for my whole life. My life has more significance in other places. They take priority. Since when did insurance ever take priority in life? It hasn't. So, we keep God on the edge. We will inquire about help when the time arises. That's what insurance is for, right? Otherwise, it's just there.

No, that's not the Christian life. It's not about insurance but about assurance. In other words, it's about what God has made us to be – His very own child. It says in the text that "*when the fullness of time comes, God sent His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive the adoption as sons.*" This assurance shows us who we are – our whole life – not something that is there when you need it. Assurance is lived now. Assurance is given to identify to whom we belong. This is an every moment gift. This means we belong to God – He comes at just the right time – and the time is right to live as if Christ matters the most.

Today we have assurance and that is better than insurance. So, let's make 2017 a year of assurance as we focus on what is sure for us. It's always better to live a life filled with assurances – especially the ones we can rely on each and every day. What are those "assurances" for you? Maybe we think of a few of these together based on the sure and certain word of our Lord...

I am with you always to the very end of the age... Jesus never leaves. He is the good physician contrasted with the poor one. He says to us, "*Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.*"

Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world...”* And in the Psalm *“Your word is lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”* Though we might be confused on what comes our way in this New Year ahead, we will have assurance that God will show us the way. Be In His Word. He guides our path – even when days are dark.

And then, one more word of assurance for you. This comes from the end of the book of Revelation. This is the assurance of the presence of God from now even through the end of time. It says, *“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”* Ah, what a tremendous blessing and assurance we have in Christ our Lord. His presence now for sure, but even in the midst of the veil of tears we live in now – this sin drenched world that sees wars, hatred, selfishness resulting in hurt, and whatever we can think of – will pass away – because God assures it!!

So, for this 2017 live not as if faith is insurance. But rather, live in Christ’s assurance. This has the Christian living life for each other – putting others first – and the result, we put Christ first. Live like that this coming year. I bet you don’t regret it. I know our Savior never did. He gave assurance by dying on that cross for your life in this New Year. May God richly bless your New Year to come. In His name we go forth. In His life we live. Amen

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen,