

## Hebrews 7:21-28

### The Significance of Christ as our Surety

*By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament – v. 22*

You have undoubtedly heard the expression *Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back!* That kind of expression is so much a part of our business culture today that consumers automatically assume they can take anything back to any store where they've made a purchase and be able to get their money back if, for any reason, they're dissatisfied with what they've purchased. We would hardly consider any store to be a valid place for business that wouldn't be backed by such a guarantee. The strength of a business can be measured by its willingness and ability to make good on such guarantees.

One of the things that the auto industry leaders dreaded during the time of their government bailouts was that they would convey the image to consumers that they would be unable to service their warranties because they were on the brink of going under. And nobody would want to buy a car from a company that couldn't honor its guarantees. This was one of the auto-maker's pleas as to why bankruptcy had to be avoided.

In the spiritual realm we discover in v. 22 that Christ himself in the goodness of his grace has condescended to make some guarantees. This is the meaning of the term *surety*. It speaks to us of a guarantor – one who backs or becomes responsible for honoring a guarantee. The Greek term occurs nowhere else in the New Testament but it was a common term among other Greek authors and was used for one that undertook for another.

The root word from which this term comes signifies a hand. It was the custom of sureties to strike hands with the party with whom they bound themselves. So we read in Prov. 6:1,2 *My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.* The wise author of Proverbs is issuing a warning that you better be careful about entering into such an obligation toward someone else because if you have become his surety or his guarantor then you are bound to meet the obligation that you take upon yourself.

We find a vivid illustration of the concept of a surety in Paul's letter to Philemon. In that letter Paul makes reference to a runaway slave that had come to Paul and had been saved through Paul's ministry. Paul sends this slave back to Philemon with the following instructions to Philemon about his runaway slave: *If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it:* There's a sort of striking of the hands in this statement where Paul says *I Paul have written it with mine own hand.* Do you see how Paul is taking responsibility to restore to Philemon any damage that might have been accrued by Philemon's runaway slave? *Put it on my account* Paul says *I will repay it.*

So when we consider Christ as a surety we are to consider him as one that makes good on his pledges. He obligates himself to guarantee certain things. Indeed, we can hear in Paul's words to Philemon Christ's pledge concerning his followers. It's as if Christ says to

his Father regarding believers in Christ , *If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Christ have paid for it by my blood atonement.* Now there is some debate in this matter of Christ being a surety as to whether or not he was made God's pledge to man or man's pledge to God. I don't think it's unreasonable to interpret the word as meaning both. He does guarantee some things to God, His Father. He guarantees that in salvation justice will be satisfied and not simply set aside. He guarantees that God will be honored and that salvation will be to the praise of the glory of his grace and that there will be no violation to any of the attributes of God in the sinner's salvation. And he does guarantee to his Father and to the sinner that he will be successful in bringing salvation to its designed end.

What I would like to do this morning is to look at this designation for Christ from a number of different perspectives and thus demonstrate to you the confidence that this gives to the believer where his salvation is concerned.

## The Significance of Christ being Our Surety

This is the theme I'd like to focus on this morning. Would you consider with me first of all that one of the key contributing factors to this significance is found in:

### I. Some of the Things that Christ Guarantees

Note in our text that there is a specific application given to us pertaining to Christ as our surety. *By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.* He was made a surety of a better testament. The word *testament* could also be translated *covenant*. The reference is to this current New Testament dispensation. We live in the day of the New Testament and Christ is the surety for all this age encompasses.

Our age is an age that is primarily characterized as an age of grace. *For the law was given by Moses, [but] grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* So we can say that Christ is the surety for everything that pertains to this day of grace. And I think we could encapsulate all that pertains to this day of grace in the words of v. 25 which speaks to us of salvation to the uttermost. *He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.*

What then is guaranteed to those that come unto God by Christ? Salvation to the uttermost is guaranteed to them. They are guaranteed that Christ will receive them and will not cast them out. Jn. 6:37 *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* Here is Christ's guarantee to sinners – he will receive them. It doesn't matter how defiled they've been by their sin – it doesn't matter how long they've been entrenched in their sin. Christ places no qualifications on his statement but guarantees to receive any and all who are willing to come to him.

And to those that do come Christ guarantees to them eternal life. *I give unto them eternal life; (Jn. 10:28) and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.* Here is a verse that is filled with guarantees. There's the guarantee of eternal life and

there's the guarantee of never perishing which is tantamount to saying that the sinner who comes to Christ will never see the hell that he deserves; and there's the guarantee of Christ's personal protection. No man shall pluck them out of my hand, Christ says, which means that no force in heaven, earth, or hell can prevent Christ from honoring his promise of salvation and everlasting life. Christ takes to himself the responsibility for saving and protecting those that come to him. That's what it means for him to be our surety.

Then again there's the guarantee of sins forgiven. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins* John writes (1Jn. 1:9) *and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. He is faithful to forgive which is tantamount to saying that forgiveness is guaranteed and it's guaranteed every time we need it and seek Christ for it.

Many students of the Bible wonder about the sin against the Holy Ghost which is the one sin singled out by Christ that will not be forgiven. The Pharisees attributed Christ's miracles to the devil and for that they forfeited forgiveness by blaspheming the Holy Ghost. But in that same context Christ says in Mk. 3:28 *All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme*. What a word is this? – *all sins and all blasphemies*. They are all forgiven. This is Christ's pledge.

I love the way the Psalmist expresses this truth in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Psalm - *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.*

These blessings are sure to those that come to Christ because Christ is the surety of a better testament. But the guaranteed blessings don't stop here. Indeed one might argue they we've only just begun to enumerate the guaranteed blessings that come from Christ. Because he receives us and saves and protects us and forgives us of our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness there follows guaranteed rest. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden*, Christ says in Mt. 11:28,29 *and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

The one who has come to Christ enjoys rest in a restless world. And he enjoys rest because he has assurance that however tumultuous things are in this sin cursed world, however severe the storms of life become all is well between the believer and God because God has received him on account of Christ and has forgiven all his sins. This is why Paul refers to this rest as a peace that passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7).

This is not to say that the Christian glides through life with no trials or tribulations. If a Christian enjoyed peace because his life suddenly became easy there would be nothing about that peace that passed understanding. The peace of easy living is not hard to understand at all. But show me a Christian that is going through the storms of life with afflictions without and fears within and still is at peace and there you'll find a peace that

passes understanding. Others outside of Christ won't understand it and yet the believer will know it. It's a blessing made sure by Christ our surety.

Access to God is another guaranteed blessing by Christ our surety. Earlier in this epistle we saw the exhortation in Heb 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* Here is a blessing that is never denied us each time we go to Christ's throne of grace – He gives us grace – grace to restrain our sins and grace to forgive our sins and grace to empower us to overcome our sins. These are but a few of the blessings that are guaranteed to us by Christ our surety. And I dare say that Christ has never failed to meet his obligation to impart the blessings that he promises. And this leads to my next point. We've seen some of the things that Christ guarantees. Would you consider next with me that the significance of Christ as our surety is seen:

## II. By Christ's Ability to Make Good His Promises

Earlier this morning you heard Genesis 44 read. This chapter gives us another illustration of the concept of a surety. Judah became the surety for his younger brother, Benjamin. He pledged to his Father that he would take Benjamin with him and return him safely and should he fail he would bear the blame forever.

Near the end of Genesis 44 we find Judah doing all in his power to honor his pledge. He's pleading with Joseph to make him his slave instead of Benjamin. Ge 44:32 *For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.*

While this scene in Old Testament history provides us with a vivid picture of the task of a surety there is also one notable contrast between Judah being the surety for his younger brother, Benjamin and Christ being our surety. The contrast is this – Judah was completely at the mercy of Joseph. It was completely in Joseph's hands as to whether or not Judah could make good his pledge to protect Benjamin and return him to his Father.

Christ, on the other hand, was not subject to any such contingency. Christ, you see, has the power and the authority to make good his promises. It's because Christ is God, you see, that he has the authority to forgive sins. When Christ announced to the man sick of the palsy that his sins had been forgiven, the antagonistic Jews expressed their unbelief but also expressed a truth in their unbelief when they said in Mk. 2:7 *Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?*

They didn't believe that Christ was God but they did believe, and rightly so, that only God could forgive sins. And in order to prove that he was God and therefore had the power to forgive sins Christ performed the miracle of raising up the man who was sick of the palsy. Listen to what Christ says in Mk. 2:10-12 *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose,*

*took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.*

Here is one of the practical benefits to Christ's miracles that reaches us today. Many Christians, you know, misread Christ's miracles. They reason to themselves that if Christ performed healing miracles back in his day then he can perform them today. And it's certainly true that he can. He doesn't do it often but he certainly can and I would go so far as to say sometimes does.

But the greater point behind Christ's miracles is the point that they demonstrate that he is God and therefore has the authority to forgive us our sins. I know I've said it before that this narrative in Mark 2 should lead us to shout hallelujah. Why? – because Christ healed a man of a debilitating disease thousands of years ago? No – we shout hallelujah because the performing of this miracle demonstrates to everyone throughout the ages that Christ can make good on his guarantee to forgive you of your sins and to forgive me of my sins.

*Who can forgive sins but God only?* – the Pharisees asked. And indeed they raise a valid point. No one can forgive sins but God only. And so we thank God for Christ, who is himself the Son of God, the second person of the blessed trinity. He can make good on his guarantee to forgive sins because of his power and authority.

We know, of course, that not even God would forgive us our sins without satisfaction to his justice. The nature of God is such that he could not merely say let's forgive and forget. Those that hold such a notion of God only demonstrate how little they know of the purity of God's holiness and how that holiness becomes compromised and defiled by sin. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity* the prophet Habakkuk says in Hab. 1:13.

How then can Christ make good on his guarantee to forgive sins? He can make good on it by taking the sinner's place and bearing the sinner's condemnation himself. *For he hath made him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (2Cor. 5:21). Christ makes good on his pledge by taking our sins to himself and giving to us in exchange his perfect righteousness.

This is also how he makes good his promise to bring us into heaven. Righteousness, you see, is the qualification for heaven. *Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven* Christ says in the sermon on the mount. And yet all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags we're told by Isaiah. How, then, can Christ guarantee heaven to those that are so completely unqualified for heaven, who, in fact, deserve nothing short of hell? He makes good on such a promise by taking our sins to himself and giving us in exchange for our sins his perfect righteousness.

And we know that he can make good his promise of life because he personally conquered death. This is why we sing: *Death could not keep his prey, Jesus my Saviour! He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!* I love the way Paul expresses this accomplishment of Christ in 2Tim. 1:9,10 where speaking of Christ he says that *Christ hath saved us, and*

*called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

He abolished death by his own death and the proof of his accomplishment is seen in that he rose from the dead. And so death now serves Christ and functions to bring the believer into the presence of Christ, while his body rests in the grave in the expectation that like Christ, that body will be raised and rejoined with its soul and then be made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God throughout eternity.

All of this should serve to strengthen our confidence in Christ. As our surety he has demonstrated his power to make good his promises. He has proven his authority and demonstrated his power and so the followers of Christ may be assured with the confidence of certainty that all that Christ has promised he will make good.

He will receive us. He will give us life. He will forgive our sins. He will and indeed has given to us his righteousness and thus given to us what we need to qualify for heaven. What a blessing to know, then, that Christ is our surety. What condescending grace on the part of Christ to become our surety. He has become the guarantor for all that pertains to salvation and for all the pertains to life. He takes upon himself the responsibility to bring his followers safely to heaven's shores.

It remains for us to consider, then, finally and briefly:

### III. Our Part in Appropriating His Guarantees

Notice with me the words of v. 25 *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

Our part in appropriating the many guarantees or promises that are set forth by Christ is to come unto God by him. They are saved to the uttermost – i.e. they are saved in full, they are saved so as to be lacking nothing that come unto God by him. And not only does this phrase *salvation to the uttermost* speak to us of salvation in its fullness but it also speaks of salvation in its extent. This term *uttermost* also occurs in Ac 1:8 *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

Salvation was breaking out of the city of Jerusalem and the land of Judaea was destined to extend itself to the uttermost part of the earth. This indicates to us that salvation is world-side in its scope. We're taught by this verse that the door to salvation is now wide open to anyone and everyone that will avail themselves of it.

The promises of life, and forgiveness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost are now available to sinners who see themselves as spiritually dead and headed for everlasting death. All you need do is come unto God by Christ. This is the action of faith. By faith we enter into God's presence by Christ. By faith we appropriate to ourselves the promises that pertain to salvation.

*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else* God says to us through Isaiah the prophet (45:22). Coming to God by Christ means coming with the belief that on account of Christ you can come – on account of Christ your sins can be forgiven and everlasting life can be your portion.

We come believing in our need for Christ's atoning death. We come believing that Christ is sincere in his invitation to receive us. I know the hymn has been sorely abused but it still expresses great truth when we sing: *Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou biddest me come to thee, O Lamb of God I come.*

The simplicity of it can't be over emphasized. God has made it simple enough for a child to understand. And I think it would be appropriate for me to say to the children of our church – you need to come to Christ. It won't do that you live in a Christian home and are under Christian influence. That's very good and that's a blessing that I hope you learn to forever appreciate. I don't deny that you are children of the covenant but what that means is that you need to come to Christ not that you can presume upon Christ. Christ expects you to come unto God by him. There must be by each individual a personal appropriation of the promises of Christ.

And in so coming to God by him you can gain the certainty of assurance. The promises of God are sure because Christ is our surety. The promises of God are trustworthy because Christ possesses the power and authority to deliver what he's promised.

And so I wonder this morning – have you come to Christ? – will you come to Christ? This is the continual practice of those who know him. We come to worship him. We come to learn of him. We come to hear from him. We come so that our confidence in him will be strong and grow stronger. And certainly our confidence does grow stronger when we see Christ as our surety.

I trust that if you've never come to him that you will come. And in coming you may gain the blessings of salvation to the uttermost. And I trust that those who do know him and have come to him will their faith strengthened in the realization that what Christ has obligated himself to perform he will indeed do and will see us through this life as well as the life to come.