

“Spiritual Security”

<u>Occasion</u>	Morning Service at Therfield Chapel
<u>Day, Date & Time</u>	Sunday 14 May 2006 at 10:30
<u>Basis</u>	Hebrews 6:9-20
<u>Reading</u>	Hebrews 6:9-20
<u>Songs</u>	770, 254, 59 from Mission Praise 285 from The Source
<u>Author/Speaker</u>	Paul Rydon

Have you ever bought an item with a guarantee,
only to find later that either the guarantee is worthless,
or the very point at which the product fails is not covered by the guarantee.

For myself,

I rarely if ever buy these extended warranties that are frequently offered by the major retailers of electronic goods.

Such goods rarely fail and generally, in my view
these additional warranties are a waste of money.

However, I do remember one occasion when I was persuaded to take an extra five years' warranty on two items

on the basis that I would get my money back at the end of the five years
if I made no claim.

What I was not told was that on receipt of the goods,

I must claim a certificate within 14 days of purchase
and use this certificate to claim my money back when the five years expired.

One of the items was a washing machine,

which was not delivered until 3 weeks after the purchase,
too late to claim the certificate;

the other was a small hi-fi unit, but I never received the necessary certificate.

So whilst I received my extended warranty,

the money-back guarantee was an empty promise.

I think it is fair to say that there are few guarantees in this material world.

In fact the only one I can think off is that there will come a time when each
and every one of us will die.

But will we?

Naturally speaking, Yes.

There is nothing we can do to stop the fading

and ultimate demise
of this earthly shell.

But what of the spirit?

Ah, well. That's a different matter!

There is nothing in our material world that gives us an answer to the mortality
or otherwise, of the human spirit.

For this we must look to our Bibles.

Jesus said:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes
in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands
condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only
Son.”

(John 3:16,18)

If we believe what Jesus says,

then clearly there is more to life

than that which exists for the short time we spend on this earth.

Indeed the central theme of the Christian message

is that those who accept Christ as Saviour,

who repent and are truly born again

will, after death,

live forever with God in heaven,

wherever that may be.

This is what Salvation is.

This is what Jesus came for.

If we do not believe,

then we will be damned.

For there will be no forgiveness of sins

and hence each one will have to stand before God in the day of judgement

and have no claim on Christ for forgiveness

and we shall be punished for our own sins.

The Bible takes this very seriously.

There is no hope without Christ.

Hence it is imperative that we believe him

and accept his offer of salvation,

if we are to avoid the wrath of a holy God.

But how can we be sure?

Do we have any guarantee?

Where is our security?

What if we commit ourselves to this God

and then we get to the end of our lives and find that we've been conned?

Perhaps he doesn't exist!

There are of course facetious answers to some of these questions

and some have argued that if there is no God it doesn't matter,

but if there is,
the Christian is far better off than the unbeliever,
but that’s just an aside.

Real answers are to be found
as we would expect in the Word of God, the Bible.
And here in this portion of Hebrews we will find both a challenge
and the guarantee we seek.
But first I want to look at some of Jesus’ own words in this respect,
then some of those of his apostles
and then come back to the text in front of us this morning.

Let’s look first at John 10:27 (*Read John 10:27-30*)

Now look at some of the characteristics of Christ’s sheep.

Firstly they listen to his voice.

They are attentive to the words of Jesus,
they accept what he says
and they believe him.

Secondly, he knows them.

There is a relationship between Jesus and his sheep.
There is communication,
knowledge
and understanding between them.

Thirdly they follow him.

We have heard much about following Christ recently.
To follow is to go where led.
To follow is to keep close to the leader.
To follow is to be prepared for suffering and even death in the Master’s cause,
just as he was willing to suffer and die for us.

These are the characteristics of those who belong to Christ.

These are some of the marks of those who are truly his.
These are the people about whom he makes the following promises.

I will give them eternal life.

They shall never perish.
No-one can snatch them out of my hand.

And to reinforce the last point he says that his Father is greater than He
and no-one shall snatch them out of his hand either.

In many ways this sermon is over already.

What more can we say?

If we are his, we are his forever.

But then I want you to look at John 14: 15 (*read John 14:15-17*)

‘If we love him we will obey him.’

So here we see another characteristic –
Jesus’ people will be an obedient people.

And for such people, *his* people,
he will ask his Father and he will give them his Spirit –
the Spirit of truth.

So if we are truly his, we will ‘remain in him’
as Jesus says in **John 15** in the discourse on the vine and the branches
and we will receive the Holy Spirit

Paul says an interesting thing to Timothy:

“If we die with him,
we will also live with him;
If we endure,
we will also reign with him.
If we disown him,
he will also disown us;
If we are faithless,
he will remain faithful,
for he cannot disown himself.” (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

Peter talks of being shielded by God’s power. (1 Peter 1:5)

So with this wealth of Scripture behind us what do we make of Hebrews 6:9-20?

In the previous few verses,
the writer has given the sternest warning to his Hebrew readers,
not to turn their backs on Christ
and in effect crucify him all over again.

It seems that at this time, as in much of the early church,
there was the ever-present temptation to turn back to Judaism
and forsake the gospel of Jesus Christ.
And the writer is deeply concerned for their faith and their eternal salvation.

Our verses come on the back of that
where the author, addressing the faithful says:
‘Even though we speak like this, we are confident of better things in
your case – things which accompany salvation.’ (Hebrews 6:9)

Here he talks to the genuine Christians amongst his Hebrew readers.
The ones who have believed and been born again in Christ.
The ones who have been hard at work preaching
and teaching their fellow Jews
that Jesus is the Christ and salvation is only through him.
He says that God will not forget their labours.
and he encourages them to continue in the faith,
to show the same diligence to the end.
Not to become lazy
but to imitate those who have already inherited the promise of salvation.

The temptation was to give up -

to grow weary in the work -
to become disheartened.

If, as some suggest, some of the Jewish Christian community were considering joining one of the strict Jewish sects,
these faithful ones may have been fighting a losing battle against the renegades,
though the text suggests rather that the majority were committed Christians
and if there were to be a defection,
it would be a minority.

But much of that is surmise.

The important thing was that they should stand firm
and remain diligent in the cause of Jesus Christ.

In every age there is the temptation to backslide.

We are weak and sinful human beings
and we so easily succumb to both the cultural
and philosophical ideas of our age.

We want to give up.

We want a rest from the struggle.
We are tired of being different.
We are tired of the routine of church life.
We are weary of our commitments.
We are tired of reaching out to others and being rebuffed
or ridiculed
or bullied.

In short,

we want to run away,
and swim with the tide.

And so he urges them to hang in there -

to be diligent in their commitment to their Lord.

And then in the next few verses ([Hebrews 6:13-20](#)) he points them away from themselves to the security of the promises of God.

They were Jews, so he takes them back to what they knew,

and what they held dear:
the promise made by God to Abraham, back in Old Testament days.

The promise is found in [Genesis 22:16-18](#), where God says to Abraham,

“I swear by myself, that because you have done this, I will surely bless you
and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky
and as the sand on the sea-shore.”

This promise meant an enormous amount to the Jews.

It was their security.
They believed what God had said to Abraham all those years ago.
For they had seen it come to pass.

And the writer here makes a big play of the fact that God swore on oath by Himself,
as there was no greater to swear by,
thus emphasising ‘the unchanging nature of His purpose.’ (Hebrews 6:17)

And he goes on to say that as it is impossible for God to lie,
we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered
should be greatly encouraged,
for we have this hope as an anchor for the soul. (Hebrews 6:18-19)

He then goes on to talk about the priesthood of Christ,
which is really the subject of next week’s talk.

So what does all this have to say to us 21st century gentile Christians?

We are not in danger of sliding back into Judaism,
but we are in danger of capitulating to a materialistic culture
and a post-modern mind-set.

And this passage reminds us that our hope –
our spiritual security –
rests on the promises of a God who cannot lie.

As we saw earlier, if we truly are born again,
if we have truly repented of our sins
and accepted Christ as our Saviour,
then nothing can wrench us out of his hand.
We are his and his for ever.

But what if we doubt our own faith?
What if we wonder whether we are truly His?

Well maybe a spiritual health check is in order.

1. Do I have a present trust in Christ for salvation?

Do I love Him
and have I accepted salvation from him
on the basis of what he has done for me on the cross
and not on the basis of anything good that I may have done
or will ever do?

2. Is there evidence of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in my heart?

Am I producing the gifts of the Spirit:
love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness, self-control?

Do I sense these attitudes in my heart?
Do others see them in my life -
not perfectly,
but in increasing measure as I grow in Christ?

3. Do I see a long-term pattern of growth in my Christian life?

Peter tells us to add to our faith:

virtue,
 knowledge,
 self-control,
 godliness,
 brotherly affection,
 and love.

It is not that these things will make us a Christian.

 We already know that that is not the case.

But true Christians will begin to exhibit these characteristics of the children of God.

Yet our final spiritual security rests not in our performance,
 but in God himself.

Remember the words that Paul wrote to Timothy:

 ‘If we are faithless,
 he remains faithful,
 for he cannot deny himself’.

And Jesus says,

 “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

May each one of us this morning,

 or whoever listens to the tape

 or reads this talk on the internet,

 know the saving grace of Jesus

 and the assurance of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

Amen

Paul Rydon –

14 May 2006