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Christ Our Surety

Readings:

“He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it” (Prov. 11:15)

“(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament” (Heb. 7:21-22)

Introduction

Some time ago on a Sunday morning the saints sang: “My Jesus I love Thee, I know Thou are mine”. As if having sung it for the first time, I realized we had just sung of Him as our Surety and an affirmation of His deity in the words: “My Surety divine”. The suretyship of the Lord is found in a number of hymns such as: “Arise my soul arise”, for in it are found the words: “ Before the Throne my Surety stands” and “O solemn hour”. There are the words: “With Thee our Surety we have died”. It is a title only used once of the Lord (Heb. 7:22) but truths concerning it are found in both Testaments:

- a) “He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it” (Prov. 11:15)
- b) Judah offered to be a surety for Benjamin to his father, that is, he became the guarantor. (Gen. 43:8-9)

When we think of the Lord as our Surety we quickly recognize that this responsibility did not stand alone. To be our Surety He had to be the Sufferer (1 Pet. 3:18), and only then could He be our “Shepherd” (Jn. 10:11), Saviour (1 Tim. 4:10), and Mediator (Heb. 12:24).

The Smarting Endured By Our Surety

In our consideration of the Lord as such, the preacher informs us that suretyship involves “smarting” and being a guarantor for a “stranger”. For the “stranger” to have peace in his or her heart there has to be the assurance of the Surety’s truthfulness and ability to fulfill that which has been pledged. It is an understood covenant.

Illustration: When I was a young teenager I decided to buy a bicycle. It was a beauty, blue with three gears. I needed a surety, someone who had that which I was deficient in, and the confidence of the store owner. It was at that point my dad stepped in. He became my surety. He signed the covenant and I had the bicycle.

That covenant for the bicycle has long since gone, but each Sunday morning thousands of saints gather to remember the Lord. It is a simple ceremony during which someone will give thanks for the cup and inevitably there will be repeated the words of the Lord: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood”. Consciously or unconsciously, they are acknowledging at least two truths:

- a) This is a covenant that still stands
- b) And Christ as the Surety of it.

The theme is so vast we cannot dwell on every aspect. We will simply mention some and deal with others. The individual can muse for themselves on:

- a) The perfections that enabled him to be the Surety
- b) The richness of His love which caused Him to willingly offer Himself to smart for us the strangers.
- c) The excellencies of His omnipotence in that He will never fail to fulfill the covenant He has secured.

We Were The Strangers

The word “strangers” is applied to Gentiles and believers in two different ways. Paul wrote: “At that time ye were . . . strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). This describes the spiritual condition of the unsaved Gentile. However, when a Gentile accepts Christ, they are put “in Christ” (Eph. 2:13) and of such Paul writes: we are “no more strangers” (Eph. 2:19). They are no longer unsaved Gentiles alienated but saved Gentiles brought into rich and glorious blessings. Peter, seeing believers as

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such, wrote “To the strangers” (albeit to mainly Jewish believers)(1 Pet. 1:1); and “I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims” (1 Pet. 2:11). When we consider the Lord as our Surety, how great is the riches of His grace toward us.

Reading the writing of Paul carefully, we recognize the deplorable condition we Gentiles we in. In Ephesians 2:12 we read we were:

- a) “without Christ”
- b) “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel”
- c) “strangers from the covenants of promise”
- d) “having no hope”
- e) “without God in the world”

Five major dark spots and central was: “strangers from the covenants of promise”. We were hopeless and helpless, living life void of any claims on God. Being Gentiles we were not only separated from God spiritually, but also by birth. No words can describe our abysmal condition.

Against this background the Lord comes as a Surety, and to be such it was much more than a mental, emotional, or physiological experience. This made necessary Him pouring out “His soul unto death” (Isa. 53:12) suffering the wounding, the bruising, the affliction, and the chastisement from God (Isa. 53:4-6). An experience of such agony, loneliness, and grief from which could be heard His anguished cry: “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” (Psa. 22:1). In those three hours of darkness He bore the full brunt of the justice of God without mercy, the rod of impartiality was brought down on Him as He stood in my place. Well may the hymn writer pen the words:

He took the guilty sinners place, and suffered in his stead
For man the miracle of grace, for man the Saviour bled.

The fire of divine anger against my sin fell upon Him so that the words could have been said by Him: “From above hath He sent fire into my bones” (Lam. 1:13). No restraint could be shown in withholding one iota of justice and no emotion could be shown in favoritism. The blessed Son must be seen as me, Rowan Jennings. Me, in all the arrogance of my sinning and in the wickedness of the damage I have done to others in my sinning. The literal fire of God had fallen before in judgment, but always on those who were guilty (Gen. 19:13, 15, 24; Lev. 10:1-2). This time it was not on a guilty man, nor a good or righteous man, but on the Holy Son of God, the servant in whom God found all His delight (Isa. 42:1).

The New Covenant

1) It depended on Divine Persons

- a) In the councils of eternity past God had made a promise, “eternal life” (Titus 1:2). It was a covenant. He who had said: “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips” (Psa. 89:34) knew that the only way that could be fulfilled was if His Son, the Lord Jesus, became the “Surety of a better testament” (Heb. 7:22). Because the Lord is the Surety, God has said: “My covenant shall stand fast with Him” (Psa. 89:28).

2) Thank God it does not depend on my keeping

- a) I thank God that the covenant does not depend in the slightest way upon me. Divine persons secured the covenant in its fulness of perfection and far reaching consequences. Glorious is the truth that God could, in quiet assurance, prophecy of the new covenant in the Old Testament (Jer. 31:31-34) because He knew the greatness of the One He had committed its responsibility to. We cannot miss the glory of this. God placed His faith in a man, committing the whole responsibility of it to him.
- b) God knew how frail man was (the weakness of the flesh), He knew the subtly of the serpent, He knew the weakness of humanity (Rom. 8:3) and He had tried man with a two way covenant, the law. It just would not work. A two way covenant is when both parties agree to something.

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Illustration: I go to the store to buy a shirt, which is the agreement. The covenant was if I gave so many dollars I would get the shirt. If I did not give the money I would not get the shirt.

That is the way the law worked. If Israel did their part God would do His. It was a complete failure. That which was needed was a one way covenant, one totally dependent on another, and that is what was secured by Christ our Surety. This whole concept came from God. Man could not make the covenant and man could not force God to make it. It all had to depend on the Surety. Since God loveth a cheerful giver our Surety had to offer Himself voluntarily, without coercing or peer pressure. The salvation God sought to provide was an attitude begotten by love and offered in grace. So must also be the work of the Surety. What a truth this is, knowing the infiniteness of the personal cost in suffering and forsaking, the love of our Surety for the glory of God, and salvation of humanity was so great He offered Himself.

3) With Christ as the Surety of a better covenant, we observe God describes it as:

- a) A better covenant (Heb. 8:6) that is, it was superior to the old one in that it had a superior priest who officiated, a sacrifice which He ratified, richer blessings He secured, and it is eternally effective. The superiority of the new covenant our Surety has ratified by His own blood can be seen in the contrast between the covenants. The following are a few of the contrasts which show the superiority of the new covenant secured by our Surety.

Old Covenant	Reference	New Covenant	Reference
The letter of the law	2 Cor. 3:6	The Holy Spirit	2 Cor. 3:6-8
Kills	2 Cor. 3:6	Gives life (lit. "makes alive")	2 Cor. 3:6
A two party covenant	Deut. 27:11-28:45	A one party covenant	Jn. 19:30
One man into the holiest	Heb. 9:7	All saints can enter	Heb. 4:16
Written on stone	2 Cor. 3:3-7	Written on the heart and mind	2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 8:10
No cleared conscience	Heb. 9:9	A cleared conscience	Heb. 9:14
Ratified by animal blood	Heb. 9:19	Ratified by the blood of Christ	Heb. 13:20
Many sacrifices	Lev. 1-6; Heb. 9:22	One sacrifice for ever	Heb. 9:11-14; 10:11-12
Begins and 3000 die	Ex. 32:28	Begins and 3,000 live	Acts 2:41
Animal blood gave outward cleaning	Heb. 9:13	The blood of Christ, inward cleansing	Heb. 9:14
Sins remembered	Heb. 10:3	Sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ	Heb. 10:10
Aaronic priesthood	Num. 3:10	Melchisedec priesthood	Heb. 5:6

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Old Covenant	Reference	New Covenant	Reference
Functioning in an earthy tabernacle	Heb. 9:11	Functions in Heaven itself	Heb. 9:24
Fades away	2 Cor. 3:11	Remains	2 Cor. 3:11
Ministry of condemnation	2 Cor. 3:9	Ministry of righteousness	2 Cor. 3:9
Came with glory	2 Cor. 3:7	Abounds in glory	2 Cor. 3:9
Could not change the individual from idolatry	Ezek. 20:28	Changed so that God becomes their God	Heb. 8:10
Made no one perfect	Heb. 7:19	Makes perfect	Heb. 13:20-21
No justification	Gal. 2:16; 3:11	Justification	Gal. 2:16-17
Physical circumcision of men	Ex. 12:48	Spiritual circumcision	Col. 2:11
The veil separated from God	Ex. 26:33	The veil was rent	Matt. 27:51 Heb. 10:20

Since the “cause” is always greater than the effect, when we consider the glory of the new covenant, how marvelously magnificent that our Surety secured it all and did it alone for the glory of God. As we ponder these blessings the words of the hymn resound in heart and mind:

What a debt of love we owe Thee
Love that we can ne'er express,
Since we through the Spirit Know Thee
Christ the Lord, our righteousness.

Thank God Christ is our Shepherd, Stone, Saviour and Surety, being eternally efficacious is His person and work. As our Surety:

- a) His moral resources are immeasurable
- b) His perfection of life is impeccable
- c) His efficacious work is immortal
- d) His service for others is impartial

... Rowan Jennings

**IT IS
FINISHED...**
Paid in Full!