

## Faith & Certainty

## Hebrews 11:1-6

### TITLE

*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see (NIV)*

### RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions for 2011 – what people would like to see.

20%

Expectations for a coming year – people look at it with trepidation – higher taxes, loss of jobs, reduced benefits. Fear, the blame game, sense of hopelessness, divisiveness. It's worrying isn't it? It brings, gloom, pessimism and also brings the worst out in people.

### TITLE

Surely this is a world where Christians can and should make a difference because we see a bigger picture; don't we? Here's the verse. To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see. Whatever the uncertainties of the world we are sure of what we hope for and certain of the things we cannot see. So therefore we bring the power and presence of God and dispel the gloom! Yeah, right!

I find that most Christians are as much caught up in the world view of 2011 as anyone else! That gloom rubs off on many of us because we are facing issues we can't yet see a way through. Perhaps we look at a new year with other fears – fears about relationships breaking down, fears of not meeting our debts, fears for our families, fears for our health. There's just so much uncertainty.

### IS THERE ANYTHING CERTAIN?

Is anything certain? What sort of person are you – an optimist or a pessimist? Is anything certain in life?

### BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Death & Taxes!

### MORE TO LIFE THAN DEATH?

Many years ago we had a student mission in Birmingham University with this message badge. More to life than death? Actually it was a period of history similar to now where life was filled with uncertainty; strikes, chaos, unemployment, industrial decline. None of us knew if we'd ever get a job. The only thing that is a dead cert in life was death because it's guaranteed to all human beings. Life is 100% fatal!

### IS THERE MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS?

If that's the case, what's the point of life in between? Most people seem to dream up some purpose or another, families, careers, interest, politics, money, alcohol. But is there more to life than this – and death?

But as we look at passages such as the one we read this morning, I believe God wants to bring us an important message to us. It's the same message as the one He brought to these Hebrews who felt like giving up. It's a message of hope and power that changes our perspective about our lives, the world and the power of God.

The trouble is for us Christians is that often our heads and hearts don't quite match up. We speak of the God of the Bible – the one who parted the Red Sea, the one who became a human being in miraculous circumstances, that man Jesus who did many miracles beyond people's imagination, the one who died and rose again whom we celebrated this morning. He was the one who did miracles in the lives of the great characters of the Old Testament which the writer reviews in chapter 11. He was the one who worked powerfully through His disciples and changed the lives of others, and changed the lives of communities and great empires and has done so throughout history.

This is our God, this is our Saviour! So should our response to the current world gloom be depression – of

course not! Our hope should give us an attitude that changes us and changes the lives of people we touch!

Right at the start of the new year I'd like to bring a challenge to all those who have never accepted Jesus and perhaps look at all of this sceptically. Today God wants you to make that step of faith and follow Jesus. At the moment the only certain things to you may be death and taxes, but if you believe in God then go the extra step of trusting what He has written. Let's remind ourselves of part of this morning's reading:

#### VERSE

*6 No one can please God without faith, for whoever comes to God must have faith that God exists and rewards those who seek him.*

God does things a different way around than we human beings prefer. We want the proof, but God say "if you want the proof, you start by trusting me". Why? God wants to enter into a relationship with us, not just have us know all about Him. All successful relationships are based on trust. Most of all God wants to trust Him and our relationship starts when we trust Him. Here's a couple of quotes relating to that verse:

*Faith connects you to God; it is your admission that you are dependent upon Him; that your hope is in Him. It pleases Him, because it is Him you are trusting and no one and nothing else. (Matt Slick, CARM)*

*God is too big to be proven. It has been said that a god who could be proven would not be worth proving. But when we trust Jesus as our Saviour, His Spirit gives us the assurance that our faith is well-founded. (Dennis J. De Haan, RBC Ministries))*

You believe that God exists. Good. Now take that extra step and accept Jesus into your life

#### TITLE

For those of you who have already made that step then here's something for you at the start of the year.

#### MR FORGETFUL

Who's this? Mr Forgetful. It's one of the burdens of getting older, but actually it's surprising how often we easily forget even if we are young. The Leaders met last week to reflect and pray on the coming year and we were asked to think of how God blessed us in the past year. You know, it took quite a few minutes to think of something, but when we started sharing, it was surprised how many blessings we had personally and as a fellowship in 2010. How easily it had dropped out of our minds!

One of the problems of being a Christian a long time, is that it is easy to forget who God is and who we are. And when we do, we forget about the blessings, the wonders, the miracles, the power and the presence of God. We lose our focus as soon as pressures and problems come into our lives, don't we? There are as many stories of great men of faith who lost their focus on God in scripture as there are great warriors.

#### DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

What about David? A great man, mighty warrior, witness of the power of God, one with a close walk with God, a great writer of poetry about God and about the way that God had rescued and kept him over the years.. Yet it was his fancy of a woman that led to adultery and murder. How easily he forgot and fell away. If he could do that, how much more ourselves.

#### TITLE

We need to make our hearts and heads match up. Let me ask you a couple of questions which are often a good test of if we've become too forgetful of what it means to be a Christian.

#### ARE YOU CERTAIN?

If you were to die tonight, would you be sure of going to heaven?

#### WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

An if God were to ask you, “why should I let you into my heaven?” What would you say? If as a Christian you can’t come up with the answer “Yes” to the first and give an immediate and clear answer to the second, then you may be suffering from spiritual amnesia. Yet God wants us to walk this world being sure of who we are and where we’re going because that makes such a massive difference as we face the issues of life. Outcomes are different when we can trust God fully.

One of the things we need forward and grow in 2011 is to develop a deeper spiritual life for ourselves as individuals as a church and we’re going to have a number of opportunities in 2011 to do that. The first one is coming up soon. You have a sheet about it and that’s Alpha

#### ALPHA

Who’s Alpha for? Everyone I guess. If you’re someone who is just exploring whether you should follow Jesus, then Alpha is a great way of discovering what the Christian faith is about. If you haven’t been a Christian for long, it’s a good way of finding out more of what living as Christian is all about. If you’ve been a Christian for years and years, it’s a great reminder of just how brilliant Jesus is! It’s designed to give everyone a faith lift!

#### ALPHA AD

To get the course up and running, I need to know who’s interested. Please sign up today if you want to join the course, or if you’re not certain but want to register your interest, please also let me know. If you want to help practically particularly with the food, then also sign up.

#### TITLE

Prayer

*Preached by Mark Reid  
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