

INI - SDG

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday a. Trinity

November 9, 2008

Hecla

**Text: Romans 15:4, 13 - *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. ...Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.***

**Theme: GOD'S OLD TESTAMENT LESSON**

- Patience
- Comfort
- Hope

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus,

Uncertainty can be debilitating to any relationship. Maybe you have a friend that likes to spread secrets and gossip about other people to you and now you are UNCERTAIN and fear that your friend may be spreading your secrets to other people and gossiping about you. Or imagine the horror of being uncertain about your parents love for you. Children are often betrayed by their thoughtless friends, but they need to know that when they come home they will find unconditional love, no matter what. Uncertainty stresses the mind and even stresses the body. Panic attacks and paranoia can set in, fearing what tomorrow might bring.

It is one thing to be uncertain about your relationships in this world, but consider the horror of spiritual uncertainty. Imagine the horror of gasping for your last breath and dying in uncertainty - not knowing whether you are headed for heaven or hell. Spiritual uncertainty is most horrifying and it is something that each one of us wrestles with at one time or another in our faith lives. And what is it that causes us to be uncertain about our standing with God? Is it not sin? We fall into that pet sin which we hate so much, that sin we struggle with again and again, and we fear that God will no longer forgive us. We fear we are too bad of a sinner to be a Christian. We think that if we were a believer we wouldn't fall again and again. And so WE become uncertain about our relationship with God and our eternal home.

But does God want us to spend our whole life uncertain about our relationship with Him, His relationship with us, and our eternal destination? BY NO MEANS! To help us in our uncertainty God has given His Holy Word, the Bible. The Bible which is full of His rich and gracious promises. And that we might be the more certain of our God and His promises He has given us the Old Testament. Let us therefore this morning consider GOD'S OLD TESTAMENT LESSONS. Lessons which teach us about patience and comfort, lessons which give us hope. May God Himself, who has promised that His word will not return to Him void, but that it shall accomplish what He pleases, and prosper in the thing for which He sends it - may He work mightily in us by that Word! Amen. (Is 55:11)

**PATIENCE**

One of the things we struggle with in not merely our personal lives, but also our faith

lives is patience. Actually, those two things for the Christian are tied closely together - aren't they? Impatience in our spiritual lives causes impatience in our daily lives. Likewise impatience in our personal lives is a symptom of being impatient in our faith. When we are enduring some sort of physical or emotional suffering we wonder with the David in Psalm 13, "How long, O Lord, how long?" How long will we have to endure this hardship? How long will we have to suffer in this life until the Lord Jesus comes delivers us from it?

To aid us in our waiting on the Lord to come and answer our prayers, the Apostle Paul says we have the Old Testament Scriptures. ***"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning."*** All the Scriptures are given by God. It is His Word. When He gave the Bible to us, He had in mind the conditions of all people to the end of time. He knew exactly what we needed to hear now, at this moment in 2008 to strengthen our faith. So dear Christians who struggle with various aspects in our walk of faith, let us turn to God's lessons from the Old Testament and learn of patience.

Consider how God's timetable to accomplish His promises are not always the same as ours. Immediately after the fall into sin, God promised to Adam and Eve that He would send one who would overcome the effects of sin and death which they had brought into the world. God promised to send a Savior who would crush the head of the serpent. Some have suggested that when Eve gave birth to her first son that they thought this might be the promised Savior - for they named him, Cain and said, "I have gotten a man from the LORD." Yet it soon became clear that Cain was not the Savior of the world, but the world's first murderer.

Adam and Eve would live for hundreds of years and never see the fulfillment of God's promised Savior. Did that mean God didn't keep His promise of sending a Savior? No. ***But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*** (Gal 4:4-5) The Old Testament teaches us patience as we see that God did indeed keep His promise and did send a Savior 4,000 years later.

Consider also the patience of GOD as seen throughout the Old Testament. How many times do we shake our head when we read of the Children of Israel backsliding into unbelief and idolatry. Time and time again we see the patience of God with His rebellious and backsliding people. He would send His prophet to His people to call them to repentance. They would ignore His prophet and His Word. God would send an enemy or natural disaster upon them. The people would repent and God would forgive their iniquity. This would repeat itself again and again for the Children of Israel.

Behold the patience of our God throughout the Old Testament and apply this truth to yourselves! Learn that God keeps all of His promises on His timetable. ***The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*** (2 Pt 3:9) Learn from these Old Testament lessons how God is patient with you the sinner and desires your repentance and salvation!

## COMFORT

Another lesson God teaches us in the Old Testament Scriptures is that of comfort. When a pastor makes sick calls or visits shut-ins, he will often use one of the psalms for a devotion. One of the great comforts of the psalms is hearing of Old Testament believers who went through some of the same things that we go through and how God aided them. Consider those "blue

days” we have from time to time. Those days when for whatever reason you just feel down in the dumps and spiritually depressed. Did you know inspired writer of Psalm 42 went through some of the same things? The Holy Spirit led him to write, **“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.”** (Ps 42:11) While the psalmist wasn’t exactly sure why he was feeling depressed, he set his hope in God to help him, and praised Him knowing He would.

Sometimes we know the precise reason we long to be comforted - sin. Our guilty conscience is accusing us because of those unloving words we spoke to our spouse or because of those impure thoughts we had. Here too God wants us to learn the COMFORT of the Old Testament.

Consider King David. King David who committed adultery with Bathsheba and then arranged to have her husband killed in battle. But more than that, David lived in unrepentance for a number of months. Some have suggested that David wrote of this period in Psalm 32 when he wrote, **“When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long.”** It wasn’t until God sent His prophet Nathan to King David that David repented. Hear the words of COMFORT which Nathan spoke to the repentant King David, **So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.”** (2 Sam 12:13) God had put away repentant David’s sin of adultery, murder, and unbelief. David was forgiven!

God has recorded these and other Old Testament events for our comfort. We are comforted to hear in Isaiah that **Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.** (Is 1:18) We are comforted to learn from the psalmist that **As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.** (Ps 103:12) We are also comforted to hear in Psalm 30, **For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.** These and more are the Old Testament lessons by which God wishes to comfort us today.

## HOPE

So how many promises do you think our new president is going to be able to keep? This is a question that arises after every election. During the campaign season many promises are made by politicians in order to win votes. If you’ve observed elections long enough, you realize that very few of the campaign promises made are kept. You HOPE that your candidate keeps his promises once he gets into office, but you are not surprised when he doesn’t.

We rejoice that our God is not like those feeble politicians. Every promise both great and small - which God makes, He keeps. This is what the Old Testament and all of Scripture teaches us that we might have a CERTAIN HOPE - HOPE in the sure promises of God that does not disappoint. **“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”** That we might have HOPE. Furthermore in verse 13 Paul writes that our God is the God of hope. **“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”**

Which promise in Scripture do you suppose was the hardest promise for God to keep? Wouldn’t it have to be the promise to save us? The promise that God Himself would supply the Savior rescue us from our own sin? Consider all that God had to overcome to keep His promise.

He had to overcome the backsliding of the Children of Israel to make sure that the Messiah would be born a descendant of Abraham. He had to overcome Jewish enemies who regularly tried to stone or arrest Jesus before the time was right. He had to overcome death, by rising from it on the third day. And then He had to overcome us! We who were born enemies of God. We who were born dead in our trespasses and sins. Your salvation was a most difficult promise to keep - but God kept it!

The Word did become flesh and dwell among us. The Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary. He came and obeyed God's Law perfectly from His first breath to His last. He did fear, love, and trust in God above all things at all times. He did love His neighbor - even His neighbors that beat Him and spit in His face - yes those neighbors too He loved as Himself every moment of His life. Then He did lay down His life as a sacrifice for every single sinner. And then on the third day after His death, He did rise from the dead! What a hard promise to keep! A promise that was made throughout the Old Testament, yet which was fulfilled in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection!

Brothers and sisters, if God kept that promise - what promise CAN'T He keep?! The promise that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness? The promise that whoever believes in the Son of God as his Savior from sin will NOT perish, but have everlasting life? The promise that he who believes and is baptized will be saved? This is the God of hope. His Holy Spirit works through His Word and fills us with hope. Hope that does not disappoint it is based in the promises of God who does not disappoint. Hope that is never let down, because God never lets us down. These are God's Old Testament lessons. Hear them, learn them, inwardly digest them that you through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope! Amen!