

Sermon for August 17th, 2025
NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

2 Samuel 22:21-34

- 21** “The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me.
22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD
and have not wickedly departed from my God.
23 For all his rules were before me,
and from his statutes I did not turn aside.
24 I was blameless before him,
and I kept myself from guilt.
25 And the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness,
according to my cleanness in his sight.
26 “With the merciful you show yourself merciful;
with the blameless man you show yourself blameless;
27 with the purified you deal purely,
and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.
28 You save a humble people,
but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down.
29 For you are my lamp, O LORD,
and my God lightens my darkness.
30 For by you I can run against a troop,
and by my God I can leap over a wall.
31 This God—his way is perfect;
the word of the LORD proves true;
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.
32 “For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God?
33 This God is my strong refuge
and has made my way blameless.
34 He made my feet like the feet of a deer
and set me secure on the heights.

Psalm 51:1-12

- 1** Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!
3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.

5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

9 Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, **2** and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, **3** and all ate the same spiritual food, **4** and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. **5** Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. **7** Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." **8** We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. **9** We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, **10** nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. **11** Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. **12** Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. **13** No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Luke 16:1-9

1 He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. **2** And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' **3** And the manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. **4** I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.' **5** So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' **6** He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' **7** Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' **8** The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. **9** And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings."

Our text for meditation this Ninth Sunday after Trinity is on our Epistle reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

A little boy is told to do his chores. This includes sweeping the floor, taking out the garbage, tidying the living room, tidying his *own* room, and feeding the dog. Of course, he does not want to do them, and for a moment he feels like grumbling against his father. But then he remembers how God was angry when the children of Israel grumbled in the wilderness, so he thinks twice. He does his chores and feels a little better after his father says “good job.”

A young man is sitting at his computer desk alone. His fingers begin to type the addresses of websites that he shouldn't be looking at. He feels anxious while he's engaged in his lust, like something is trying to pull him away from it. The entire time, a part of him is praying for help peeling himself away from the things he's looking at, because he knows that it was lust that brought about the destruction of so many in Israel's history. Finally he pulls away, shuts off his computer, and asks for forgiveness for that momentary lapse in self-control.

A woman begins following all the latest “drama” accounts on Instagram, and finds herself embroiled in the scandals between celebrities, ex-boyfriends and ex-girlfriends. She starts to ignore her duties at home, always focusing her heart on the latest *juicy* story to the point where she cannot concentrate. Then, one day she snaps out of it when her father tells her that idolatry – expecting all of one's good to come from something that isn't God – was the reason so many Israelite women were carried off into slavery.

Old Testament History

For all of these examples, we see how St. Paul advises us regarding the use of the Old Testament histories. If you could summarize the Old Testament in a single sentence from a theological perspective, it would sound like “The history of Creation, mankind's fall, and God's preparations for the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus to fix it.” But from a *human* perspective, centering on the actions of persons like Moses, the judges, the kings, and the priests of the Old Testament, it is best described as a dismal record of human failure.

Here is a brief history of humanity according to the Old Testament. Adam and Eve fell in the Garden. Then Cain killed Abel. Then mankind became so wicked that God killed all of them except Noah and his family. Then Nimrod tried to make a tower to spit in God's face. Abraham lied about his wife. Sarah pimped out her maidservant to her own husband. Jacob engaged in sorcery and openly cared little for one of his wives. Jacob's children tried to kill their brother Joseph (they ended up selling him into slavery instead). The Israelites forgot God while they were slaves in Egypt. They rebelled against Him and grumbled and went after idols *right after He delivered them from slavery*. During the period of Judges, they constantly ran off into idolatry, and the priesthood became corrupt under Eli's sons. Israel's first king, Saul, consulted a witch after a lifetime of trying to murder his rival. David was a land-pirate before he won Israel's civil war and let men die in battle to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba.¹ The kings after David were almost all bad, going after pagan religions, bathing the land in blood, sacrificing their own sons, and doing deals with evil empires to consolidate their power. Most of the priesthood followed suit. When God said “enough” to all of this, the Assyrians took the northern Israelites into captivity and almost none of them repented. When He took the children of Judah into Exile in Babylon, few of them returned – and even fewer had truly changed their hearts. The post-exilic prophets and Ezra and Nehemiah write about how even *after* God mercifully permitted Judah to return home, they still grumbled against making good offerings, dragged their feet with Temple restoration, and many of the men divorced their aging wives to marry pagans. When God used Esther to deliver the

¹ Lest we forget that Uriah the Hittite was made to die in *battle*, where other Israelites were fighting as well.

children of Judah from a madman named Haman – who wanted to *kill them all* – they respond to that great deliverance by celebrating themselves and refusing to even *mention* our Lord.

This is only scratching the surface. The Old Testament chiefly speaks of those people who knew the promise of the Messiah and had the Law of the Lord revealed to them. The rest of humanity during that time was almost universally in deep spiritual darkness – God concurs with Habakkuk the prophet that they were *even worse* than the Israelites.

The Purpose of Old Testament History

So the Old Testament shows a great amount of just, *awful* failure on the part of humanity. At the best of times, the battle between good and evil could be described as a bloody stalemate; even then, evil had an advantage, because all the devil had to do was wait until the generation of saints turned over to the next. Then temptations could hit the young people all over again and the bloodletting of humanity would continue. The Old Testament gives us a unique point of view; unlike any other ancient historical book, the Word is crystal clear about how bad humanity had it before Christ came to save us.

Now God has saved our souls, and in the battle between good and evil He has leveled out the playing field. Christians have the advantage of seeing the mistakes of the eras before Christ, can learn from them, *and* we have the advantage of knowing that we are covered by Jesus's precious Blood, our sins are washed away in Baptism, and the Holy Spirit actively helps us in sanctification. The Christian can read his Old Testament, receive the warnings from it, and move forward.

A Gentle Warning

Someone might say we don't “need” it anymore, because we have the Gospels and Acts and the Epistles and Revelation. Why keep the Old Testament around, other than *maybe* retaining the Psalms for prayer and the wisdom literature for daily living? Ah, St. Paul won't hear it beloved. Those records of the Israelites sinning in the wilderness, of their sinful living before and after the Exile, *all* of it is there to help perfect you. Let no one disparage the right use of the books of the Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and more to help us in our walk with Christ.

And we need that warning more than ever before. St. Paul writes “let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.” We cannot – *must* not – be arrogant in how we see those who went before. The Holy Spirit uses the Word here that you may learn from the old believers' mistakes, and thus have the head start to sanctification that they did not have. If anything, as we read about the dour painful histories there our studies ought to make us grateful to have the Scriptures – and even more grateful that we have the fullness of revelation in Christ Jesus.

The Old Testament is there to help perfect us. Let us rejoice and read it *every day* with true devotion.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.