

Pentecost XV  
August 23-24, 2008

*“The Final Word on Salvation”*

Text: Isaiah 51:1-6

This past week, I had the opportunity of looking over some pictures in the archives. As we looked through some of these pictures, there was the one of a decade ago or so of the opening of the corner stone. All three pastors, along with Pastor Niemoeller were in the picture. Sadly when the cornerstone box was opened, everything was deteriorated. What we have today in terms of storing technology is much superior to 1889. For instance look at the Presidential Museum and all the care given to documents there.

On the other hand, our day of today sees products that lack the quality of items from days gone by. We say such things as: “They just don’t make them they way they used to!” Both of these extremes point to the fact that the things of this world do wear out, but God promises do not. What God promises to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob still stands, as we know it through the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ.

God continues this promise to his children and it is a promise for us today as well. It calls for faith on our part that trusts what He says, but one that comforts us with-

**THE FINAL WORD ON SALVATION**

- I. It Brings comfort to us**
- II. It belongs to God**

## I.

**A.** God had promised Abraham: “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:3) Abraham would be the father of many nations. How would that be? At those times he had no children. God’s promise called for faith upon Abraham’s Part, but that is what set him apart. St. Paul pointed this out when he said: “He did not weaken if faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb.” (Romans 4:19) Instead we are told that he grew in his faith.

God is calling his children then and now to remember the foundation of that promise. What did God promise? How did he bring it about? These are important to us today as we face challenges to our faith and we have worries and concerns about our lives. This week in some of my visits I did a short devotion on Zephaniah 3:17 which says: “The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.” This is the comfort promised to give to his people of long ago and he continues to deliver.

It certainly takes faith to see this, but this is what God is calling his children to have. I ran across this prayer thought the other day: “When I seek God in all I do, I am amazed at the wondrous ways in which God works.” We cannot force God’s hands as it were, but when we direct our thoughts and actions towards him our eyes are opened to his working in our lives.

**B.** Even in the midst of difficulties and impossibilities, God is able to do this. This is the point of verse three of our text: “For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her

desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.” These are quite the contrast. God is able to change that which from our eyes seems impossible.

As we consider what God is able to accomplish, there is great joy. This would come ultimately in what verse 4 talks about. Throughout the prophecy of Isaiah, the servant is spoken of whom we know as our Savior Jesus Christ. God talks of his justice being a light for all the peoples. The justice of God is unlike what we see in our world of today. We can't be totally just and fair, but God can. Sin has entered the world, God does not remove it, and instead he allows it to remain and presents to us his eternal solution in the servant our Savior Jesus Christ. In particular this servant was a “light to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6) Those who didn't know these promises or have this comfort would now have it.

## II.

A. The psalmist says in Psalm 46: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.” (Psalm 46:1-2) The last verse of our text tells us that even the physical world may disappear God's promises will outlast that activity.

Pairing this verse with Psalm 46, we can take comfort in several ways. In recent natural disasters the physical world has been altered. We can also see this as an extreme situation. The physical realm if the world we live in such as the mountains is solid and difficult to move. Finally there is the end of the world. St. Peter says: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works done on it will be exposed.” (II Peter 3:10)

This a picture of what will happen at the end of the world. It is pretty alarming as we view it. There is something that outlasts all of this and God tells us what that is and it is our true source of comfort because it comes from his promise to us which he fulfilled when he sent his Son into the world as our Savior and will be complete when Jesus returns again.

**B.** “But my salvation will be forever, and my Righteousness will never be dismayed.” As we see all things fade away, we know with certainty that God’s promises stand forever. Earlier in this prophecy Isaiah said: “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.” (Isaiah 40:8) St. Peter also cites this in the New Testament.

No matter what happens in our lives we can have confidence in the promises of God. Things come and go, they seem solid and sure, but soon fade away. Our lives are not always as they should be. Thanks be to God that he does not base salvation on our performance. We would all be doomed. The words he spoke on this occasion were for the comfort of his people.

In our world many promises are made that are not kept. People speak gloom and doom and certainly our sins accuse us. Above and beyond all of that are the promises of God for he has the final word. Amen.