

**08.30.26 ~ Pentecost 14**  
**“Christ’s Sovereignty: Hope & Assurance”**

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**Words of Assurance**

**Lamentations 3:19-27** <sup>NIV</sup>

Pew Bible 709

- <sup>19</sup> I remember my affliction and my wandering,  
the bitterness and the gall.  
<sup>20</sup> I well remember them,  
and my soul is downcast within me.  
<sup>21</sup> Yet this I call to mind  
and therefore I have hope:  
<sup>22</sup> Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed,  
for his compassions never fail.  
<sup>23</sup> They are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.  
<sup>24</sup> I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion;  
therefore I will wait for him.”  
<sup>25</sup> The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him,  
to the one who seeks him;  
<sup>26</sup> it is good to wait quietly  
for the salvation of the Lord.  
<sup>27</sup> It is good for a man to bear the yoke  
while he is young.

**Leader: These Are God’s Words of Assurance.**

**People: Thanks be to God!**

**Words of Hope**

**Colossians 2:6-13** <sup>NIV</sup>

Pew Bible 1027

*Spiritual Fullness in Christ*

- <sup>6</sup> So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.  
<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.  
<sup>9</sup> For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, <sup>10</sup> and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. <sup>11</sup> In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self-ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, <sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.  
<sup>13</sup> When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins . . .

**Leader: These Are Apostle Paul’s Words of Hope.**

**People: Thanks be to God!**

**Please pray with me:**

Sovereign Lord, help us to sense your Hope and Assurance on a daily basis. We have been selfish and complainers yet seek your forgiveness now. We repent; we love your words of assurance in this writer's lament and appreciate the apostle Paul's words of hope. May we surrender to your sovereignty in all aspects of our lives, especially our daily stresses. We promise to seek your direction and your guidance in all we do. We are grateful for a short-term resolution to the air conditioning situation, and we thank you for hearing our prayers and helping all things to come together. Speak through this message and messenger. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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Are you a “cup half full” or “cup half empty” kind of person? One can be both, but we tend toward one or the other. Last week's message and those over the summer were both. We studied the prophecy of Jeremiah which was definitely a warning type of forthcoming doom and gloom destruction, so repent! And Paul's letter to the Romans dealt with sin and judgment yet also God's mercy through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Last week's sermon acknowledged God's sovereignty through both judgment and his mercy, while this week's message begins with lament but ends with hope and assurance, also based in the salvation of Jesus Christ. It is not my intent to over-simplify our studies; in peacebuilding dialogue or the field of restorative justice, the terms “both/and” are preferred since they allow both majority and minority opinions to be heard. Decades ago, studies found that the common thinking patterns of “either/or” divides people into rigid, opposing sides of an argument like win or lose, right or wrong. “Both/and” thinking accepts two different truths or needs at the same time. It helps groups find shared solutions and lasting peace (Toda Peace Institute.)” This principle I learned from a friend in that field of restorative justice has been not only valuable, but it gave me context and affirmation for the way I have always viewed the

world. My optimism and faith have always provided a hopeful, positive view on even the most difficult of negative circumstances, although not everyone appreciates that perspective.

Lamentations at first glance seems all negative, but actually, it is made up of five dirge poems of mourning a lost loved one. Here, it is the loss of a beloved place, the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC for your historical context. Chapter or Poem 1 is the fall and destruction of Judah (by Babylon); chapter/poem 2 is God's judgment and his punishment; chapter /poem 3 is a personal (not national) lament expressing the experience of affliction and how God redeems the pain. Chapter/poems 4 and 5 are the hope of God's love, loyalty, and assurance. It is thought to have been written by Jeremiah or a close ally, and he likens what Judah is going through to a prison experience or a rotting corpse. Wormwood is a perennial shrub that produces bitter oil and gall is a bitter poisonous oil from animals, snakes, or plants like hemlock. The words were often used together to convey toxicity, injustice, or malice because the symptoms were painful and deadly. The poet illustrates Judah's condition with these dramatic words. He was as downcast as Judah, yet still, the writer has hope because of God's steadfast love and mercies that are new every morning. Great is God's faithfulness; affliction is a temporary set-back! God does not glory through anyone's affliction; his glory is revealed through his love, our confession and surrender to him, and God's reward of loyal, consistent mercy and grace.

Hard times come to all of us at different times in our lives; are your roots solid in the sovereignty of Jesus? Spiritual practices and strong faith must be built and sustained so that we are always ready for such times.

This is one reason we come to church weekly! You know the soil in Israel is rock hard, yet some of the sweetest fruit grows there: pomegranates, dates, citrus, olives. Some of the kindest Christians I know have come through traumatic events and horrible circumstances, yet their lives were redeemed and restored. We can have “both/and” situations and opinions in our lives: both difficulty and restoration, both burdens and hope.

The apostle Paul’s life story demonstrates this concept too. He told the Colossians about his background to convince them to drop the false teachings that were popular in the city of Colossae. Teaching the new Christ followers, he reminded them that once they believe in Jesus as the Messiah, they enter into eternal relationship with him. Jesus becomes the foundation and vital center of all existence for them. Jesus overcame even death by his resurrection, so his followers would be freed from earthly death. Not as they might assume to live longer in human form, but to live in eternity with him as his children and disciples. Remember, these Gentiles were grafted in or adopted into the family of God, not as Abraham’s biological descendants, but as those protected from our sinful tendencies through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and our right relationship with God, Jesus Christ, and his Advocate, the Holy Spirit. This relationship must be nurtured, but cannot be earned, however. For our surrender and consistent, unconditional love and repentance, grace is given.

Paul encourages the Colossians to hold fast to the teachings about and of Jesus and to live in him, following his example. Be rooted in and then built up. That is sanctification. Salvation is a type of pilgrimage or development that grows and fortifies the roots along the way. The depth

of one's belief and practice is like a root system supporting the tree of faith. Epaphras did a fine job of teaching this town about Jesus, so Paul is affirming his work despite other false heretical teachers who claim to be prophets. He warns them not to be victims of human trickery or fake authority. You've been circumcised, baptized, and forgiven. At the time of this writing, Paul is in prison, so gives them the doctrine of Christ's sovereignty. The Lordship of Christ will see them through any difficulties and will strengthen their faith and belief in God who is above all other small "g" gods the teachers are mixing in. The fullness of Christ is one with the triune omnipotent and omniscient God who knows all and is all. Why do we look for other human insights? Because God cannot be seen, only felt and studied. That is why Scripture is so important to share God's words, thoughts, and insights. There is so much more to this passage, but the bottom line is hopeful and assured. Once baptized, we are saved. Our actions though must support that belief. Amen? Amen! ||

**Please pray with me:** Thank you Lord for the guidance you give us through your Scriptures each week. May we never forget that you have called us into relationship and glory. Help us to stay close to you through your word, your prophets, evangelists, apostles, teachers, and shepherds. Remind us to obey, listen, and serve. Transform our hearts, Lord, so that we may receive and answer your call to different ministries. Help us to feel your love and to express it to others every day in some way. Be with us in our meeting decisions and bless the wedding couple, their families, and the marriage that will be celebrated in you today with the Vietnamese Gospel Church. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.