

Read the Entire Bible

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Please turn in your Bibles, that critical part of your armor, the sword, to Romans 15. For even Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves, as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs, so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy.

As it is written, Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles. I will sing hymns to your name. Again it says, Rejoice, O Gentiles, with this people, with his people.

And again, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praise to him, all you peoples. And again, Isaiah says, The root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise and rule over the nations.

[1:55] The Gentiles will hope in him. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of his Holy Spirit.

Come and preach the word to us. Amen. Amen. You have your Bibles there.

I just want you to take a look at them. How much of the Bible is in the Old Testament? If you were to look at yours, how much of the Bible is in the Old Testament?

How much of God's word to man is found in that first part of your Bible? It depends on how you measure it. If you go by books, 39 of the 66 books are in the Old Testament.

That comes out to be a shade under 60%. If you go by chapters, which is a rather arbitrary way of doing it, but if you go by chapters, the Old Testament is 80%.

[3:01] If you go by words, it's 76%. If you go by letters, it's 73%. So for the sake of the argument, let's say it's about 75%.

Three quarters of what God has to say to men is found in the Old Testament. And so my question is, are you reading it?

Let's say on average, you need 2,500 calories a day to grow and to thrive, to be healthy, to be strong. And let's suppose that for year after year, you only eat 600 calories.

That's 75% what you're not eating of what you need. Or that's 25% of what you need. It's not eating 75% of what you need. What's going to happen?

600 calorie diet for year after year after year. After year after year. I think immediately you're going to be hungry. And then pretty soon, you're going to get cranky.

[4:13] You're going to get moody. And you're going to lose energy. And then you're going to start dragging. And then your muscles are going to wither away. And then you're, probably a lot before this, but your brain is going to get fuzzy.

As it's trying to think on so many less calories than it really needs, all that energy it doesn't have. And then you'll probably start to get sick. And then your organs will start to shut down eventually. Now, maybe that's happening to you spiritually. Maybe that's happening to you spiritually. 75% of God's word to us is found in the Old Testament.

And we need it to flourish. We need it to grow, to thrive, to have vitality. Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law. He meditates day and night.

What is he like? He's like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

[5:18] That's vitality. That's flourishing. That's the flourishing I'm talking about. And planning yourself by the word of God, by the law of the Lord is how that flourishing and that vitality comes into our lives.

And so my question is, do you want to be a dried up tree out there in the desert or do you want to be a tree planted by streams of water? 75% of the water that you need, 75% of the stream is the Old Testament.

But maybe you're saying to yourself, maybe you're a little leery, the Old Testament. That's like a different world.

It's like a different time. It's a different place. I have problems now. I have needs now. I have relevant issues that I have to deal with.

And what are those stories and those histories of all those kings and those prophecies of those places that don't even exist anymore, so many of them, what do they have to do with me? What do they have to do with where I am right now?

[6:29] Well, look at what Romans 15.4 says. Look at what it says there. Romans 15.4 says it has everything to do with you right now. For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us.

How much of God's word is in the Old Testament? About 75%. How much of the Old Testament is for you right now? 100%. 100%. All of it.

Everything that was written in the past. All scripture is God-breathed and is useful. So, it's useful. Just look at the context that Romans 15.4 is found in.

It comes in, not in some sort of theoretical, theological study. It doesn't come out of the sky to people that don't have problems, to a church that doesn't have problems.

It comes right in the middle of a very practical church problem. A very practical personal problem. And all church problems are personal problems because the church is people.

[7:32] And there were these weak Christians and there were these strong Christians and there were some Christians saying, you can't do this. You can't do that. And they really believed what they were saying.

They were convinced that they were right. And then on the other side, the strong Christians were saying, it's okay to do this.

It's okay to do that. And they were convinced. They believed that they were right. Two groups of people, a group of individuals here and a group of individuals here, both convinced that they are right.

Now, it's not hard to imagine that, but under their breath and maybe even to the faces, the conflict had turned a bit ugly.

Maybe they were even insulting each other. And you can imagine that what the weak Christians could say about the strong Christians, they don't care about godliness.

[8:40] They don't care about holiness. They're just like the world. They don't do anything different. They abuse God's grace. And then you can imagine on the other side, the strong Christians looking at the weak Christians and saying, what is wrong with these people?

Don't they see? Don't they understand what the gospel is? It gives us freedom from these things. They're such babies. They're so old-fashioned. They don't have the brains to see the freedom that is ours in Christ.

And it's very possible that insults were starting to go around. And that's not hard to imagine for us because we know how ugly it can get when we disagree as Christians.

You can think of the things that we fight about. And very often, we do a good job of insulting each other and a very bad job of listening to each other and accepting each other is what he says in verse 7.

And into the middle of this very practical church problem, Paul goes back to Christ. But he doesn't go back to him directly. He goes back to him through the Old Testament.

[9:45] And he says, this is what needs to happen in your life. This is the spirit that you need to have. For even Christ did not please himself. See, that was what was going on there. Each side was trying to make themselves happy.

They cared most about themselves. But Christ didn't come with that attitude of, I want to do what best for me. I just want to please myself. No, instead he did what God wanted him to do.

He served God's people even when they insulted him for it. And that's what he says, this Old Testament passage of the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me. So, here Christ is serving the Lord. And what does he get for it? Insults. He gets looked down upon. So, Christ knew what it was to be insulted and then turn around and love. Christ knew what it was to be insulted and how difficult it is to stay the course when people are against you. Well, how do we know that he knew what that was like?

[10:49] We don't have a journal of Jesus, of his ministry, saying, I'm doing God's will here and they're insulting me for it, but we do have, the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.

Now, where is that found? You have a footnote, probably, in your Bible. Generally, I don't want you to just look at things that aren't there, but look down at the footnote. It's Psalm 69, verse 9. The truth that the Romans needed right in the middle of this sharp, interpersonal, very close to their hearts conflict was found in the Old Testament. And so we can't say, I have real needs. I have relevant needs. I have real problems. I don't need to read about far off Abraham and far off David and weird, all the other stuff. I don't need to read about those kings and those long prophecies. That's not going to help me. Paul says, that's exactly what you need. That's exactly what you need to be thinking about.

[11:57] It's all for us, all for our good. And so let me ask you, when was the last time you went to an Old Testament passage for a practical problem that you have today?

When was the last time you turned a struggling brother, a struggling sister, with whatever they're struggling with, to an Old Testament passage? And said, brother, sister, look at this. What about this story? What about what God did here? Here's what you need. Now, right away, I know that the Old Testament can be hard.

Someone not too long ago said to me, you preach out of the Old Testament all the time? That's really hard. And I don't preach out of the Old Testament all the time because it is really hard. It's hard sometimes to see the connection between that and where I am. But thankfully, right here in Romans chapter 15, verse 4, it gives us a way of looking at the Old Testament, how to read it, how to come to it. What kind of heart should I come with?

[13:05] What kind of spirit should I come to? It's hard to read. But right here in verse 4, we see how it tells us how we should look at the Old Testament.

And you see four lessons. Four lessons at coming at the Old Testament of reading it. And I just want to take them right in order. Four lessons from verse 4.

And the first is you need to come ready to learn. Ready to learn. Everything that was written in the past was to teach us. There's a teacher and if there's a teacher there needs to be a learner to teach us.

So read it to learn. It has lessons that you can't learn anywhere else. It has things that you can't learn anywhere else that you'll find nowhere else.

See, God doesn't just use the Old Testament to fill up space. He doesn't just use the Old Testament as sort of, now, it's fluff. Now, if you're in high school and college or junior high or whatever and you've had to write a paper and the teacher says it needs to be five pages.

[14:12] It needs to be seven pages. It needs to be three pages. And at best, you only have two pages of those three or four of those five or six of those seven. And so what do you do when all you got is material for six pages but you need to have seven or you're not going to be fulfilling the lesson?

Well, you fill it with fluff, don't you? You make it longer. That's, I think, people, what we do. But there's no fluff in the Old Testament.

There's no needless repetition. There's no, I can use longer sentences just for the sake of filling up space. No, everything there is to teach us.

Every word of God is flawless. It's perfect. It's right where it needs to be. So ready to learn. You're the student. It's the teacher.

And now, if you're the student and it's the teacher, then the teacher decides the curriculum. The teacher decides the curriculum, not the student. Ready to learn means ready to learn whatever it's ready to teach you.

[15:16] I don't think we understand. If we did K-12 like we read our Bibles, we would probably be all stuck in fourth grade.

Because we sometimes don't come to the Bible ready to learn the things that we're not wanting to learn at that point.

If we were a student and said, no, I don't feel like learning math today when we're in second grade, what happens? You get stuck. But what, the student has to be ready to learn what the teacher is teaching.

So we need to be ready to learn from the Old Testament. That means going there and not cherry picking and deciding what we want to think about all the time. There is a time and a place for going there for something special.

But it also means taking in whatever it has to teach us. Ready to learn. Ready to learn. That looks like curiosity. Questions.

[16 : 18] If I wanted to learn how to fix a car, I'd ask lots of questions. I'd go to Rex's shop or Dave's shop over there and I'd ask lots of questions if I wanted to learn how to fix a car.

So why is this here? Why do I need to learn this? What example is here?

What does this tell me about God? What does this tell me about God's ways? What does this tell me about me? What does this tell me about other people? How does this contribute to the big gospel story?

How does this tell me what does this tell me about Jesus? So ready to learn that's curiosity but it's also grit. It's also stick-to-it-ness.

It's also doing it day after day after day. Ready to learn. Learning takes a lot of study. It takes a lot of pain.

[17 : 19] And it takes a lot of mistakes. But you stick with it. So moms and dads let's say you've been doing this momming and dadding for 15 or 20 years.

Have you learned to be a better parent in that time? Yeah. But you didn't learn to be a better parent by bailing. You didn't learn to be a better whatever you're doing right now by quitting.

You learned it by sticking with it. And that is the way it has to be. That's the way it's going to be with all the Bible with the Old Testament. Weeks and months and years.

Maybe the Old Testament doesn't yield its secrets to us because we simply don't try hard enough or long enough. And so we keep going back.

We keep asking questions. And it gets clearer. It will get more familiar. And you'll get more out of it every time. There's that saying that the Word of God is shallow enough in places for a baby to cross.

[18 : 29] But then it's also deep enough for an elephant to swim. And so what I want to say is let's go swimming with the elephants. Let's not just say I have to stay in the baby pool.

It's fine to start there. Let's go swimming with the elephants. That's the first lesson. Be ready to learn. The second lesson is read it to endure. Read it to persevere.

Read it to keep going. That's what he talks about next is the endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures. The Old Testament teaches us how to endure. To persevere.

Now we all need that. That's what the Romans needed. They're in this personal conflict. How do you feel when you're in the middle of a conflict? You feel like quitting.

You give up on those people. Instead of doing the hard thing you just do the easy thing. The Romans needed to know how to endure. We need that very same thing. But this learning to endure is more than waiting something out.

[19 : 32] It's not just a passive thing. Patience in the Bible is almost always used in the active sense. The active tense. So run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

So you're persevering but what are you doing? You're running. You're persevering in the run.

You're persevering in the waiting. It's waiting on the Lord. Pastor John preached a couple of sermons or Sunday school lessons on waiting on the Lord.

Waiting on the Lord is an active thing. I'm not just sitting there doing nothing. I am doing what God has called me to do. I'm active in prayer. I'm active in faith. I'm active in calling on the Lord but I'm not giving up at it.

It's persevering through trial. John Calvin says it's the meekness by which we willingly submit to God. That is going on in your life right now where God is calling you to do something and you need to willingly submit.

Peter says we have to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand that in due time he might lift us up.

[20:41] There is a time to humble yourself. To wait. But there is also a time when God lifts you up. We are all in some way or other waiting, enduring.

But the Old Testament now this is the point the Old Testament is not a stranger to any of that. the Old Testament is full of that. We see it again and again of people waiting.

Waiting in bad situations. Hard situations. But they are enduring. James says you've heard of Job's perseverance. James needed an example of a person persevering in a trial and Job says you remember you've heard of Job's perseverance and what the Lord finally brought about.

Noah was building his ark for a hundred years. A hundred years of it's not raining and people insulting him.

He's obeying God and yet he's receiving insults. That's hard to swallow isn't it? When you're doing the right thing and what do you get for it? You get the insult instead of good job well done keep it up.

[21:54] You get the insult instead but Job or Noah knew what that was like. year after year he was the only righteous man on earth. Maybe his sons but talk about loneliness.

Talk about hard. So are you lonely? Are you going through something hard? Noah knew what that was like.

Abraham waited years and years for Isaac. He waited his whole life for God's promise because God said I'm going to make you the father of many nations.

and he waited his whole life and he never saw it but he endured he persevered. Think of Joseph.

Think of so many others. So read the Old Testament to help you to endure. You feel like you're shot up. You feel like you're dragging.

[22:58] You feel like giving up. Go to the Old Testament. It's full of stories of years of endurance of perseverance. Now that's the second lesson. Read it to learn how to endure.

The third lesson is read it for comfort. Read it for comfort. The NIV has encouragement. The word is paraklesos. You probably hear its sister word paraclete in there.

The Holy Spirit is the paraclete the comforter. So read it for comfort. What do you see again and again in the Old Testament?

It's God comforting his people. Comforting them. Comfort comfort my people. Israel's down in Egypt. They've been there a long time.

And it's not getting better. It's getting worse. And they're groaning under their chains. And God hears and God answers.

[24:01] Think of the book of Ruth. Carries the story of Ruth but it begins and ends with Naomi. Naomi loses her husband.

She loses her sons. So she's without husband, without family and yet the Lord brings her comfort. comfort. It ends with her being comforted.

It takes her from sadness to happiness from sorrow to comfort. Last week I read of the widow of Zarephath. Elijah stayed at her house for some of that three and a half year period where there was no rain in Israel.

And she we first meet her and she's picking up sticks to make the last loaf of bread and then after that there's nothing left. She's going to die.

Her son is going to die. And Elijah shows up in the nick of time and he says share some of that with me and Elijah says the flour is not going to run out the oil is not going to run out share with me.

[25:05] And she let Elijah stay in their house. Think about that. She had the faith to let in one of God's servants when there was nothing to give them.

She was going to share her house and share her food with them when food is next to impossible to come by. And then what happened to her? What happened? Her son got sick and they got sicker and then he died.

Now moms and dads, how are you going to feel about that? What's going to go through your mind when that's your story? She's in anguish. not only because she's lost her child, but she lost him in a way that's so unexpected.

Starving to death is one thing, but now here you have food and then he gets sick and dies? And she says to Elijah, can you imagine what's going through her mind? She says to Elijah, did you just come here to remind me of my sin and then kill my son?

So there she is. She's gone through this terrible thing and all of a sudden her sin from her past, all the wrong things that she did, it's starting to pile up on her door, it's starting to pile up like snow in a

blizzard, trapping her in her life and all she can think about is you came here and I'm such a sinner and now my son is dead and Elijah takes the boy and he prays earnestly for him and lays on top of him and prays three times saying, Lord, return his life to him and the Lord heard, he had mercy on that poor widow.

[26 : 48] Now brothers and sisters, can you see yourself in that story? I've let you into my life, I've opened my house and now all my sins are getting piled up, the bad things are happening, but sin and death don't have the last words.

They didn't have the last words in her story and they don't have the last words in your story.

Christian, the Lord comforted her. Think of lamentations, misery and destruction is everywhere. Jeremiah is sitting in the rubble, in the burnout rubble of Jerusalem and a lot of that book is just wailing and weeping of how bad it is.

But in the middle of it, in the middle of it all, for men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion.

So great is his unfailing love. And it's not just isolated passages. It's the whole book is God bringing comfort. Adam and Eve are driven out of the garden, driven out into a wild world with now it's cursed and they're working.

the Old Testament is the beginning of God coming to sinful men and bringing them back and bringing them comfort and bringing them hope. So does it feel like the Lord has cast you off, abandoned you?

[28 : 18] The Old Testament is not a stranger to that. It is full of people that have walked that path and the Lord has comforted them.

And so bring your sorrow, bring your broken heart to the Old Testament. And there you'll find people just like you and there you'll find the same God that comforted them.

So ready to learn, ready to read it to endure, read it for comfort and last read it for hope. Now I just want you to think about something.

We talked about flourishing at the very beginning. What does it look like to be flourishing spiritually? Well, it doesn't necessarily mean there's not wind, there's not problems, but it does mean that you're learning, you're enduring, you're comforted, and you have hope.

That's what it looks like to flourish in the Christian life. That's what it looks like to have a healthy, vital Christian life. And so here, read it for hope, and that's how this verse ends.

[29 : 33] That's where this encouragement and this comfort ends. That we might have hope. The Old Testament is a book about hope.

It tells us about a God of hope. hope. Yes, you are guilty. Yes, God's wrath is coming.

That is a huge theme in the Old Testament. The guilt of man, the wrath of God, but it doesn't end there. There's a Savior coming.

There is hope. There's hope in the middle of all this. There's hope coming. And so if the Romans would read and understand the Old Testament, they would find hope for their interpersonal conflicts.

See, that's the problem. We can endure a lot, but the moment we have no hope, that's when we quit. If the Romans would read and understand the Old Testament, they would find hope for their present circumstances.

[30 : 35] Remember, they're trying to learn to get along. They're trying to figure out how Jew and Gentile can fit together into one body.

They're trying to figure out how we can accept one another and how we can live with differences. And that's hard. It can seem almost impossible.

It seems almost hopeless. We've lived apart for hundreds of years. But now, we're going to live together in one body? We're so different.

How will this ever work? And Paul says, if you read the Old Testament, you'll find hope for that. Well, how so? Because in verse 8, he says, Christ has become the servant of Jews on behalf of God's truth to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs.

Jesus came to serve the Jews. Jesus came to make those promises that God made to the patriarchs true, to fulfill them, to confirm them, to bring them about. And what was that promise?

[31 : 36] Well, God promised hundreds and hundreds of years ago to the patriarchs that the Gentiles, the nations, would come. That Abraham would be the father of many nations.

And that the nations would glorify God for his mercy. His mercy. Salvation would come to the Gentiles.

angels. And they would join the Jews in praising God. See, the little problem that they had right there in Rome, it wasn't just a little story all by itself.

It was just a little chapter in this big story that God was writing. A lot bigger story that God is writing. A story that he started with Abraham.

Abraham. The nations will glorify God for his mercy. And you see, God is a God of promise. He's a God of mercy. And then he starts a list of Old Testament passages all saying the same thing.

[32 : 45] So, look at verse 9. Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles. I will sing hymns to your name. Now again, where is that found?

2 Samuel, chapter 22. It's the song of David. It's the song that David wrote and sang at the end of his life.

After he had gone for years and years from being a shepherd, and now God made him a king.

Remember how hard that was. Saul fought him. It seemed like it was never going to happen.

And yet, he had become the king. But, this song takes place also after his terrible sin with Bathsheba. His killing Uriah.

His year of hardening his heart. It comes after Absalom revolt. And the death of his sons.

[33 : 47] And here it is still. David is singing. David is singing. Can God take you through terrible times and then lead you to the other side where you start to sing?

David says, yes. And David is singing something special. I will praise you among the Gentiles.

There is sin. There is failure. But God is a God of promise.

And he is a God of mercy. And therefore, there's hope. And therefore, we'll sing. The next is verse

10. Again, rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people. Again, that's Deuteronomy chapter 32.

That's not the song of David. That's the song of Moses at the end of his life. And what has Moses seen? He's seen slavery and redemption and rescue.

He's seen sin and he's seen failure. the people are now going into the promised land after years of waiting.

[34 : 56] But Moses isn't going himself. He isn't going himself. He sinned against God and so he won't go up. And yet, after Israel sin, after Moses sin, there's still a reason to sing, O Gentiles, the nations are going to worship with God's people.

It's still there. God is a God of promise. God is a God of mercy. And so I'm going to sing. Verse 11, Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples.

That's Psalm 117. It's part of the Hallel Psalms. They were Psalms that were put together after the exile. And the people sang them.

Israel had fallen hard. They were now just a shell of their former selves. We've talked about that on Sunday evening. We've talked about this period after the exile, when Israel has just shrunk down in population, shrunk down in size.

They're not anybody. They're under the heel of just empire after empire. They've been through the wilderness. They've been through the desert of exile. They've been thrown to the wind.

[36 : 07] God has cast them away. But still, still, they're holding on to this promise. The nations will sing his praise.

Now, how is that ever going to happen? How are the Gentiles ever going to come and sing God's praise? Here we are, we're nothing. Well, God's a God of promise. He's a God of mercy.

So, there's hope. Then, Isaiah speaks up in verse 12. The root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations.

The Gentiles will hope in him. Now, Isaiah is saying that despite what he knows is going to happen. Right then and there, when Isaiah is giving this prophecy, think about the condition that God's people are in.

They're guilty, they're sinful, they're going the wrong way, exile is coming, judgment is ready to fall, and yet, despite their sin, despite their failure, God made a promise.

[37 : 21] God said the nations are going to come, and he said he's going to send the root of Jesse, part of David's family.

God is a God of promise, God is a God of mercy, mercy, and that's the Old Testament. It's real sin, it's real waiting, it's real hard things, it's real longing, but in the face of it all, God is faithful, and God is merciful, and so there is hope, and that's what the Romans needed, they needed to see the big

picture.

Yes, there were little concrete things that they needed to do and change, but they needed to see the big picture, that God is a God of promise, God is a God of mercy, there is hope, and so they were trapped too far down here in their little world, and we get there too, don't we?

How am I going to make it? Wondering how I can keep going, what's the point? This is too hard, but Elijah and Esther and Daniel and Abraham and Jacob and Israel and Egypt, David going from nobody to being the king tells us that nothing is too hard for God.

God has a plan, he has promises, and he is going to keep them, and they're promises of mercy, and so that's why he is the God of promise, he's the God of mercy, and then in verse 13, may the God of hope, he's the God of hope, fill you with all joy, as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, and so do you want to flourish?

[39:17] do you want to have that strength? Read the Old Testament. Do you want real help for practical problems? Read the Old Testament.

Read it to learn. Read it to endure. Read it to be comforted. Read it for hope. So I want to say two last things. The first thing is, do you have hope?

Do you have hope? hope that you know that in 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 100, 300 years, that things are going to be good.

That God has promised you to do you good. See, that's the wonder of being a Christian. You always have hope. You go to your deathbed with hope that your best things are yet to come. And you live in heaven 100 million years and you still know that God is going to do you good. Your hope never dies. You live with a God of hope, with a God of future good things.

[40:28] But Jesus became a servant. He became a servant to make those promises happen. The root of Jesse will spring up. One who will arise to rule over the nations and the Gentiles will hope in him.

That's where you get into the hope of God. You go through Jesus Christ. You put your hope in him. You say all my future good things are not going to be decided by me. I'm not going to be able to pull this off.

Jesus, I put my hope in you. I trust in you. So do you have hope? God is a God of hope. God is a God of mercy and God is promised.

He says whoever comes to Jesus will be saved. And then when you get into Jesus, he fills your life with, look at verse 13, with peace, with joy, with hope.

Do you want those things? They're in Jesus. Do you not have those in your life? They're in Jesus. That's the first thing I want to say.

[41:31] Do you have hope? That hope is in Jesus. And then the second thing here is this is how I want to end. I've been talking a lot about reading the Old Testament.

Read it to learn. Read it to endure. Read it to find comfort. Read it for hope. Maybe you say, I'm not a good reader.

And I totally understand that. Read it, you say, I'm not a good reader, and I want to say, that's okay. This is a wonderful age that we live in. It's wonderful.

It's bad in some ways, but it's wonderful in a lot of ways. You have computers, you have iPads, you have phones, you have phones that will read the Bible to you.

So, for next to nothing, you can find an audio version of the Bible. So, if you aren't a good reader, if it is hard for you, don't let that stop you. Use all that technology.

[42:43] Use it to get into God's Word. But whatever you do, don't let the Word of God sit on the shelf. It's your life, it's your peace, it's your joy when you read it and believe it.

And don't let the Old Testament sit on the shelf. It was all written for you to help you to thrive. So, study it, meditate on it, hear it, apply it, and through it, the God of hope will fill you with all peace and joy as you trust in him so that you might overflow with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, can you imagine that? A whole bunch of people overflowing with hope? That would be a good place to be. So, let's be reading our Old Testaments. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your Word.

we thank you for the Old Testament. No, it is somewhat mysterious in some places and somewhat hard in many places. Yet, all of it, every part of it, is for us to teach us, to teach us to endure, to teach us to find comfort, to teach us about you, to teach us about us, to teach us about Jesus.

And so, we thank you for it. Will you forgive us our neglect? And will you help us to be more serious, to be more persevering, to be more curious, and more grit as we read it, to keep reading it.

[44 : 13] And will you please, Holy Spirit, fill us with a knowledge, an understanding, an illumination as we read it. That we would not come to it and the light bulb would not go off.

but you would shine through your word and you would make the truth clear and plain to us. That it might translate to faith.

That it might translate to joy. That it might translate to overflowing hope. Lord, help us to be a flourishing people. You've given us everything we need.

Help us then to make use of them. And for those who are lost, who have no hope, Lord, what a sad place to be. To have to shove down the future and pretend like death isn't there.

To pretend like you know what's going to happen. Lord, please have mercy on them. And bring them out of the hopeless, dark place that they are in.

[45 : 17] And bring them into the light of the hope and the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus, come and shine in their lives. even as you said that you would.

We ask this in your name. Amen.