**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

***The Believer’s Church Alive***

**Ephesians 2:1-22**

**November 11, In the Year of Our Lord 2018**

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**(Unless otherwise noted, CSB17 text is quoted)**

We have been preaching here in Round Top from December of 1999. We have preached through every New Testament book (Revelation twice). We have also preached through the Old Testament books of Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, Job, the twelve Minor Prophets and, at times, sermons from portions of the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Proverbs, Psalms, Deuteronomy, Numbers, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Ezekiel and Daniel. We have quoted from every book in the Bible. Since we are not on anyone’s time demands, we have been at our own pace. In January of 2019, we will be entering the twentieth year of ministry here in Round Top.

Only four people have been here with us from the beginning: Ken, Nedra, Junell and Veronica. Praise the Lord, for they were serving and worshipping the Lord here before I arrived.

When we first came, I was asked if I planned to stay beyond a few years and then move on to a bigger church. They said they were concerned that I would lead the church to borrow a lot of money to build the building then leave them in dept to go for a bigger paycheck and climb the church pastoral ladder. I expected that view, because there are many pastors who follow that path.

Seminary taught us that to make an impact in a community we had to stay at least five years. In addition, the *first* Pastor to serve would have a unique relationship that no other Pastor would ever have. We only have so much time in this life. And, as time goes by, the value of life’s time becomes more precious. In the most transparent eternal reality, we are on God’s time. I recently heard an analogy about people, clocks and time. I thought about God’s mission ~~to~~ for all of us.

Man can make clocks and calendars and base them off the orbits of the sun and the moon and the planets. Man has a limited amount of clock-space to make his observations. However, God has all the time. God is the *author of time* or, as I have previously heard, God is the *Father of time*. He is infinite. Clocks and calendars are for keeping track of man’s existence while he is alive and to leave a record for those that come after him in this temporal era. However, time for God falls within His presence as the Alpha and Omega. God is infinite on a linear line that never ends in either direction. This is incomprehensible for man. Man seeks for a circular life and, in reality, this is what has happened throughout man’s time. There aren’t any new truths to human nature; there are just the repeated cycles of life. Yes, the technology changes, but the application uses the same reasoning. Man is challenged to consider God and neighbor in balance with himself. These balances are weighed on the scale of God’s righteousness where He holds the certification of the scale. In America, we have Lady Liberty blindfolded holding the scale of justice with a sword in her hand. She symbolizes the fair and equal administration of the law, without corruption, greed, prejudice or favor. This is admirable in a legal system where all people are to be treated equally by the law. However, God doesn’t have a blindfold. He sees every detail. God can see beyond what the temporal law can examine. God sees deep into the hearts of people and weighs who they are on the scale of the Cross.

When I was speaking in public schools in Houston as a Houston Police office, I told students that there was the law and there is right and wrong. Some people commit crimes and never get caught, and, therefore, there isn’t any criminal record. So, they can say that they are not a criminal considering their public record. I challenged them not to think of themselves as always being legal but being morally right. It is not enough to say that you got away with it, and, therefore, you’re okay. You have to live with yourself and the people around you despite what is known about you in an official record.

**So, lets talk about our Moral responsibility to God and neighbor. The Call of every preaching and teaching pastor** is to deliver God’s Word in order to achieve the following:

1. Edifying God

Being spiritually prepared

Being technically prepared

Never forgetting what the mission is

Being Accurate and True delivering God’s Word

Being courageous; do not side-step the text because it is challenging to our times

1. Blessing God’s People

The Goal is to preach to and with but not at the congregation

Never forget we are all in this ministry together

Be available to answer questions

Remember everyone is at a different place in understanding God’s Word

Through this delivery, people’s hearts are laid bare and there is a call for self-examination before God, before the Cross of Christ

**In our series, “The Believer’s Church Alive”,** we are teaching the events and the application of those events that are part of the formation of the Church through the centuries; the first century is foundational to most and in truth indispensable. The previous centuries begin with God as accounted in Genesis 1 though Malachi. This time obviously leads to the birth of Christ and is indispensable in understanding God as Jesus.

Jesus literally restates the principles in the Old Testament. However, Jesus corrects their misunderstanding and misapplication of God’s Word. This is seen clearly in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. 21 "You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. 22 But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment.

The rest of chapter 5 has many such statements by Jesus. So, when we preach and teach the New Testament, we hold to the reality that we too are repeating God’s intent for people contained in the Old Testament.

Paul, being a Pharisee of Pharisees, knows the Old Testament as it is a part of his DNA. God used Paul’s gifts and knowledge to span the teaching from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Remember that these titles were added by man. The O.T. is referred as:

The Law -The Prophets -The Writings -The Latter Prophets.

The New Testament is a collection of letters circulated by Believers. Once they left the hands of God’s chosen writers, they were cherished as the Word of God. The congregations and individuals around the Mediterranean Sea in the 1st century received them and over time duplicated them hand by hand. They were accepted as authentic and acceptable over time as being the words and teachings of Jesus Christ. They were circulated one by one and in bundles of letters, particularly the Gospels and Paul Letters. Their acceptance is noted in church officials’ letters such as from Athanasius' 39th Festal Letter in the year 367 A.D. <http://www.ntcanon.org/Athanasius.shtml>

There is now known to exist over 6000 witnesses (text on Papyrus, parchment or velum) to the New Testament in whole books or portions. The earliest is from the last decade of the first century or the first decades of the second century (John 18:31-33 and 37-38) called P52. The P stands for *Papyrus*. These manuscripts are studied by scholars around the world. There aren’t any contradictions to the incarnation of God, the life of Jesus, the Cross, the Resurrection, The Ascension, or the ministry of the apostles. There are a few questions concerning the ending of the book of Mark 16:9-20 and a few other areas, but these have no impact on the total truth of God’s Word. Of course, God’s Word is a complete document and every letter or book is woven into the whole.

**Summing up the Gospel**

1 Corinthians 15 is often quoted as a synopsis of the Gospel witnessed by Paul.

**1 Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand**

 **2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold to the message, I preached to you-- unless you believed in vain.**

 **3 For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,**

**4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,**

 **5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.**

 **6 Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep.**

 **7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.**

 **8 Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me.**

 **9 For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.**

Paul then declares in ~~a~~ brief that Jesus Christ died on the Cross for our sins. Both the church in Corinth and Ephesus have mixed members made up of Jews and Gentiles. Paul is directed by God’s spirit to make sure it is known that the Gospel (that is, salvation) is opened to the whole world and not just the Jews. It is more highlighted in the Ephesus letter that Paul intended for the Gentiles to know that they are included in God’s salvation plan, so he points to the Cross. Paul writes to Believers in Ephesus and gives additional witness to the Gospel. Both letters are personal. The Ephesians letter goes into more detail about the transition from a person’s old existence to their new life. The words Paul uses to describe a Believer’s former condition is striking. This witness highlights the difference in a person spirit-filled, meaning transformed to a new person in God incarnate witnessed in the life of Jesus Christ from a lost person in the fallen world.

Paul describes the previous condition in verses 1-3 which takes a turn in verse 4 to God who is rich in mercy. This passage of Scripture is profitable to read this morning.

**Ephesians 2:1 -22**

And you **were** \***dead** in your trespasses and sins

 2 in which you previously lived according to the \*ways of this world, **\*according to the ruler (GR: archon: prince NAU) of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient.**

 3 We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also.

 Transition

 4 But God, who is rich in mercy,

because of his great love that he had for us,

 5 made us alive with Christ

even though we were dead in trespasses.

 You are saved by grace!

 6 He also raised us up with him (God)

and seated us with him (God) in the heavens in Christ Jesus,

 7 so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

 8 For you are saved by grace through faith,

and this is not from yourselves;

it is God's gift-- 9 not from works, so that no one can boast.

 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

 11 So then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh-- called "the uncircumcised" by those called "the circumcised," [reference to the Jews] which is done in the flesh by human hands. [This can never save or make justified. Human hands, merit, cannot save.]

 12 At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, [Spiritual Israel – covenant people]

and foreigners to the covenants of promise,

without hope and without God in the world.

 13 But now in Christ Jesus,

you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

 14 For he [Christ] is our peace, who made both groups [Jews and Gentiles] one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility.

In his (God to Christ) flesh, 15 he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. [This is God’s scale of justice and righteousness. God made both Jews and Gentiles the same. Both are under His promise (Galatians 3: 28-29).

28 There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

 16 He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death.

 17 He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you [The Gentile] who were far away and peace to those who were near [The Jews].

 18 For through him [Christ] we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

 19 So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers,

 but fellow citizens with the saints,

 and members of God's household,

 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

 21 In him the whole building,

being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

 22 In him (Christ)

you are also being built together

for God's dwelling in the Spirit.

 So, with these three examples from three books in the New Testament (Ephesian, 1 Corinthians & Galatians), we see that God desires to make clear to the world what His intent is, for all of mankind to be included in His promise for salvation, that is, through a surrendering faith on man’s part and through His Cross on His part. Our witness needs to be accurate. ~~that~~ God desires that His salvation message ~~is~~ be directed to people of the whole world and that it ~~is~~ not be stuck in the religion of western thought. The Muslim, the Buddhist, Taoist, the Eastern Mystic, the Atheist, the Agnostic, the pagans of the world, God’s Message is directed to all.

 So, the Salvation of God is not exclusive to the Jews; it never was. The Jews are God’s example to the world of how to have a relationship with God and how not. Paul points back to Abraham in Galatians 3 to make the point that salvation was made through the promise of faith and should not be stuck in the law. For the promise was given to Abraham 430 years before the Law. The Gospel of the Cross is for everyone.

End of Sermon for November 11

 The Cross is the crossroads of all theology. Study God’s Word long enough and a person will see that all roads point and proceed from the Cross. The Cross represent the life of Jesus from Spirit conception to opening ministry to the teachings to the test in the wilderness, to challenging the religious leaders to His arrest, trial, crucifixion, the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances and ascensions. The Cross launched the followers of Jesus to a life of witnessing. With all this the resurrected Jesus Christ breathed His Spirit (John 20:19ff) into the disciples and they then went forward in the face of great opposition on the Temple steps in Jerusalem and preached the Gospel Message to the Masses in Jesus name.

This is the formation of the Church in the 1st century. The 1st century was considered in Roman years being 753years after the founding of the city of Rome.

**The year:** In the early days, Romans denoted years by the names of the two Consuls who ruled each year and that system continued long after other ways of denoting the year were used. Later they began to count the years from the foundation of the City of Rome. There is no single agreed date for that but a Roman writer Marcus Terentius Varro fixed the date as what we would call 753BC and that is the standard I shall use here. Romans used the letters AUC after these dates (in Latin *ab urbe condita* - from the foundation of the city).

<http://www.web40571.clarahost.co.uk/roman/calhis.htm>

**The prince of the power of the air is present**. Ephesians 2:2

This answers the question about Satan being alive and well on planet earth. The presence of evil in the world is a reality.

Job 1:7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

This is a fallen world. Death reigns. God allows death to function here**,** because He gave us “free will choice.” We are called upon to make a choice for God. The Holy Spirit brings conviction to the hearts of people (John 16:8). With this conviction**,** there is an opportunity to surrender, thus allowing God to indwell us and giving us the power to repent and make a choice for the Lord to be the ruler of our lives. Therefore, the choice opposing God exist**s** for us to choose as Adam and Eve did. Some do not want to face this reality. If the Creation and all life is left up to its own**,** with no choice for God**,** the creation implodes on itself. The value that changes the chaos into life is God (Gen. 1:1-3). God made the decision to enter into the chaos, into the formless and void creation He created. What purpose did God have in mind for this kind of creation?

**Genesis 1:1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

 2 The earth was formless and void,

 and darkness was over the surface of the deep,

and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

 3 Then God said,

 "Let there be light";

and there was light.

 4 God saw that the light was good;

and God separated the light from the darkness.

It is evident in the Genesis account that God wants us to be aware of the creation He created; but, unless He orders it, there is chaos; there is no form, and it is void. Many are hung-up on making Genesis a scientific statement. However, we dare not miss the spiritual message that is clearly spoken. The Hebrew words *thohwu* (without form) and *bohewu* (void) have the meaning of an existence that is chaotic, without rule and as in Jeremiah 4:23 (a land under judgment). God brought His order (His Spirit) that sustains life as He had planned. God has brought His Spirit to bring salvation to a dark world. Once His Light was in place, He said it was “good.” God did not call the darkness “good.” Without this intervention there cannot be sustained life. God purposely created this world to be dependent on Him or death will rule.

Some may say that God messed up when He created the world. Why did He not create a flawless world? The Answer is in the Bible. The short answer is that love is choice. Therefore, God created a world with a choice for love. For there, to be a choice for love there has to be alternatives to choose. Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 demonstrated that the there is a choice for the opposite of God’s love. They chose themselves over God. We can say they “loved their choices” over God. The classic case of human pride. God made this possible because there was also, at the same time, the choice to pursue all His provision in the Garden. We all have the same choice.

Who is the Creator God? 1 John 4 describes God as “love.” God is love. God is love so He created a world with love. This is who He is. This is the genetic code from God. The world’s DNA has “love” imbedded in its core. But there is one element of “love” that is eternal. Love is not forced and cannot be bought from God by mankind. Love is freely given by God. Love is a spiritual condition of the heart. Therefore, God seeks a spiritual reply from us. God desires us to love him back. Love is a gift and a choice. You do not buy a gift or it would not be a gift. This is grace. God offers to everyone who has ever lived His grace and love. God has made Himself known through the creation from the beginning (Romans 1:18ff).

There is an interesting view comparing the animal kingdom to people. In the animal world**,** the system is sustained by animals feeding off other animals. This sustains their bodies**,** and they live for a short time. There is a defining difference between animals and man.

God breathed His life into people who are to manage the creation**,** but are not to feed off of other people. We**,** too**,** derive sustenance from the animal world**,** but not each other. Of course**,** we see in history thatthis has happened**,** but it is not instructed by God. In the Bible**,** the practice of cannibalism is a result of disobedience to God. When it takes place, it is a self**-**inflicted curse upon people for not living in obedience to God’s covenant (Deuteronomy 28: 53 and following; Jeremiah 19:9). This brings to bear a clearer depiction to Paul’s statement that they *“were”* dead in their trespasses and sins. Life is dead without God! Does that statement make since? How can you have life**,** if there is death ruling it? You cannot. This is a spiritual statement leading to a physical state. The backdrop for the Jew is cannibalism due to rebellion against God. The Romans witness the Jews boil their babies for food (Josephus “Jewish War” (VI,193). This rebellion brought death**,** which is a total breakdown in God’s order.

Obviously**,** this teaching is a direct reflection upon culture in America. Abortion *“on demand”* is a practice in America. In America babies are not consumed to sustain the parent’s life as in the Bible. However, due to modern medicine baby-parts (organs and tissue) are sold for profit. http://www.centerformedicalprogress.org/2017/12/planned-parenthood-baby-parts-business-partners-admit-guilt-in-7-8-million-settlement/

 The babies are consumed to depraved economic desires. They are viewed as their life being inconvenient, untimely, or their life will be unproductive and not worth living. However, Planned Parenthood found a profit center. Therefore, they are killed in the womb or during live- birth (Partial Birth Abortion) before they become a burden to society. Babies are given up on before or when they are naturally born. With abortion *“on demand”* ongoing, no one can deny that the prince of the power of the air is present and operating in the hearts and minds of some people and government.

**Christ Makes Us Alive**

**Ephesians 2:4-7** 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

 **Alive in life?** *You* ***were*** *dead in your trespasses and sins*! We do not talk this way today. However, the point is well made in the context of Paul reaching out to the Ephesians and to us. The statement is directed at people who have a resurrected life with Jesus Christ. This is why we can say we have been crucified with Christ and raised to a newness of life in Him. This is why Paul declares in Galatians 2:20 that he has been crucified in Christ . . .

**Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

. . . and it is no longer he that lives, but Christ lives in Him. Basically**,** he has been replaced by the risen Lord. This is the power enabling him to say he lives by faith in the Son of God and not in the flesh. This is supernatural life that powers us to overcome and accomplish what we, on our own, cannot do. He declares he is loved by Jesus who surrendered Himself for him. We Believers tell people that God, as Jesus, surrendered to a human physical death to pay the price for our sins, but then defeated human death by rising from the tomb. If you changed one word in the sentence to state “*You* **are** *dead in our trespasse****s*** *and sins*”**,** it would be directed at someone who does not know the Lord as their Savior. The tense is present and not past. Believers are all alive in Christ not dead. The Believer’s life of trespass and sin is behind them. Believers may have a bad day**,** but do not practice a life with the purpose of committing trespasses and sins. Our old self no longer exists. We remember the old self bound in darkness, fearing each day with uncertainty in our behavior. Now, we are confident with our emotions not losing the battle for our minds and hearts. We are constantly putting on an additional maturing layer of Christ.

 Paul gives the answer of the ages in Ephesians 2:4-7. Loving someone who is in rebellion against you is hard to do. Loving someone who is attacking you and persecuting you is hard to do. However, this is what God does with His mercy. His great love spoke from the Cross when He said forgive them (Luke 23:34). God takes us the whole way. He saves us and takes us with Him for eternity. We have a bold witness to an undeserving world, but we are held captive by the love of the Lord who saved us and called us for His purpose and not because of our works but for God’s gift of faith working in us. The Lord has granted us a life with Him due to His mercy and grace (1 Timothy 1:8, 9).

This is the Message from the 1st century church. By the end of the first century the Bible, the cannon was complete.

 12 "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

 13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

 14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

 15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

 16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

 17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

 18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book;

 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Revelation 22:12-21 AMEN Copyright © 2018 Matthew Diehl All Rights Reserved