**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Sermon

*Romans Series*

*God Unites*

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

August 4th In the Year of Our Lord 2019

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS text is quoted)

*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.*

*Galatians 5:18*

Romans and Galatians are intrinsically linked. Yes, Paul wrote both letters (2 of 13 in the New Testament), but it is the content that links them. In fact, many of Paul’s letters address salvation by faith as opposed to the Law. Romans and Galatians contain more of a concentrated message concerning faith and Law. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (God), that gives us faith verses the law of sin and death.

 In churches today, this is still a huge issue. Many churches simply ignore God’s instruction through Paul. Many denominations add one rule after another to obtain salvation. Water-baptism is most likely the work on which they center their merit-based salvation. And, of course, you need them to officiate and be sure you complete the salvation works correctly.

 There are other links in the Bible. The Old and New Testaments are not only linked but they overlap in that the Old Testament contains many prophetic references to God as Messiah, the Servant to come and the Spirit.

**Isa. 48:16-17** (CSB17)

16 Approach me and listen to this.

From the beginning I have not spoken in secret;

from the time anything existed, I was there."

**John 1:1-4** (CSB17)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

 2 He was with God in the beginning.

 3 All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.

 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

**And now the Lord God has sent me and his Spirit.**

 17 This is what the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel says:

I am the Lord your God,

who teaches you for your benefit,

who leads you in the way you should go.

This is most important to understand, because the God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament with the same covenant. Understand that these titles “OLD TESTAMENT and NEW TESTAMENT” have been added. Some say that the God of the Old Testament is a legal God, a revengeful God. These voices do not understand God’s judgment. They confuse God’s judgment with human emotion and place them on the same operational field.

 We do not forget that it was God as Jesus who pronounced judgment on Jerusalem and the nation of Judah.

 **Mark 13** 1As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!"

 2 And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down."

(See also Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 19:43-44.)

 The Romans destroyed Jerusalem by 70 A.D.

**The main role of God as Messiah** is to go to the Cross and pay the price for everyone’s sin and then rise from the grave, thereby demonstrating God’s mastery over life and death. The God that creates life can resurrect life. And then there is modeling the life in the Spirit that is victorious over the law of sin and death. Like Paul writes in Galatians 5 **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. . . **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

 **23** gentleness, and self-control. . . If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. (CSB17)

**Romans is no doubt a theological statement.** When you tell most people that you are reading theology, they might tend to think you are an academic, a bookworm, bored with life or a religious fanatic. Our extreme entertainment-driven world does not find theology entertaining unless you dress it Hollywood-style in a movie questioning the veracity of the Christian faith. Then they are interested. Yes, and throw-in well-known actors whose very presence lends somewhat of a legitimacy to the fictionalized tale. These movies tend to lead people, who do not know anything about real theology, further away from considering a serious investigation into God’s Word.

 Romans is not a Hollywood movie and, therefore, does not have entertainment flare to draw large audiences. Perhaps we should publicize our study in Romans with a different title.

What would that title be? Paul’s Rebellion? The Roman Plot? God’s Masterpiece? A Roman Letter? Letter to Rome? The Flesh is Dead? The Law and the Spirit? The Roman Holiday? Wait, that was a movie . . . Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck (1953). Ok, maybe. . . “When in Rome.” Whatever title we decide the content is the same. But, wait. We need a leading man to play Paul. Who? Someone stubborn, steadfast, vocal, with ability to communicate and sacrifice. The leading men that come to mind in the last seventy-five years are Jimmy Stewart . . . No, stutters too much. Henry Fonda, Richard Burton, Kirk Douglas? No. Definitely not spiritual. Could be Charleston Heston, but he already played Moses; hard to top that billing. Hey, what about our man Spencer Tracey who is well-known as the leading judge in the film about the Nuremburg trials of Nazi Germans? Spencer Tracy is a good choice. There you go. . . “A Roman Letter”, starring Spencer Tracy. I bet people would come. A Box office hit.

 The point is, that many in the fallen world do not take the Bible seriously unless you appeal to their entertainment culture.

 **Bring People Together.**

What is the one major declaration the book of Romans makes?

My view is that God brings people together. Romans demonstrates God’s will and intent for all people. God’s covenant with Abraham is a good example of highlighting God’s original intent in uniting all people under His covenant of love, grace, faith, forgiveness, atonement and sacrifice. All of these, God brings to the heart of people. Genesis 12:3 specifically states that all the nations will be blessed under the covenant God made with Abraham. Hebrews 11 tells us that God’s covenant of approving/justifying people to Him through faith was in place with Adam’s son, Abel, as he was approved to be righteous by his faith. Abel is not viewed to be a Hebrew. However, the blood line from Abram can be traced to Abel.

 Therefore, this salvation “covenant of faith” was inclusive from the beginning. God simply selected the Hebrews to demonstrate to all people how to have a relationship with God and how not ~~to~~. We shall never forget that God revealed himself through the creation to all people from the beginning (Romans 2:18ff). This means that even before Abraham, starting with Adam and Eve, God revealed Himself through what He had made.

We started today’s sermon with a quote from Isaiah 48:16 that also points to the Messiah/Holy Spirit who were present from the beginning and functioned as these two are part of God and His triune nature.

Jesus declares that “before Abraham was born, I am.”

**John 8**

 53 "Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out *to be*?"

 54 Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God';

 55 and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.

 56 "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad."

 57 So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

 58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

 We have seen how God desires to bring all people together and in the same way. There are not two or three or multiple paths to God. God speaks through Paul making what was from the beginning very clear. We are all saved by faith. This is the uniting point for all mankind. There have never been different ages whereby God saved people in different ways. Prior to Hebrews 11, that declared Abel approved by faith, we have a witness in Hebrews 10 that the Law, that the blood of sacrificed animals, never did take away sin. So, this means that the Law was never intended by God to be a means to justify us to God. The Old Testament witnesses this fact.

**Isaiah 1:11** "What are all your sacrifices to me?" asks the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings and rams and the fat of well-fed cattle; I have no desire for the blood of bulls, lambs, or male goats.

**Micah 6:6-8 6**What should I bring before the Lord when I come to bow before God on high? Should I come before him with burnt offerings, with year-old calves?

 7 Would the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousand streams of oil? Should I give my firstborn for my transgression, the offspring of my body for my own sin?

 8 Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the Lord requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God

**Psalm 40:6** You do not delight in sacrifice and offering; you open my ears to listen. You do not ask for a whole burnt offering or a sin offering.

**Psalm 51:**16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering.

 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

 18 By Your favor do good to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem.

 19 Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, In burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.

**Scapegoat**

 In this ritual, God still instructs that an animal be brought forth for a sin offering. God does not call for the sacrifice of a person as many of the pagan societies did. The Law did instruct animal sacrifice for atonement of sin, but the sacrifice had to continually take place. These offerings were insufficient in that they were temporary in application.

In addition, these animal sacrifices demonstrated that God did not want people to pay the death-price for their sin. And in none of the animal sacrifices did the animal come back to life. God, as Jesus, did raise from the dead, not only paying the price for sin but also defeating the price for sin, overcoming the effects of sin by resurrection. This demonstrated that the law of the Spirit of life is greater than the law of sin and death. This is exactly what God declares through Paul in Romans 8:1ff.

We see in Leviticus that God creates a system whereby a scapegoat has all the sins of the people placed on it and the scapegoat then is sent to the wilderness never to be seen again.

**Leviticus 16**(CSB17)

7 Next he will take the two goats and place them before the Lord at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

 8 After Aaron casts lots for the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other for an uninhabitable place,

 9 he is to present the goat chosen by lot for the Lord and sacrifice it as a sin offering.

 10 But the goat chosen by lot for an uninhabitable place is to be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement with it by sending it into the wilderness for an uninhabitable place.

**Leviticus 16:21** Aaron will lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the Israelites' iniquities and rebellious acts all their sins. He is to put them on the goat's head and send it away into the wilderness by the man appointed for the task. 22 The goat will carry all their iniquities into a desolate land, and the man will release it there.

**Leviticus 16:34** This is to be a permanent statute for you, to make atonement for the Israelites once a year because of all their sins." And all this was done as the Lord commanded Moses.

**Hebrews 10:**1 For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, **can** **never,** by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, **make perfect those who draw near.**

 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?

 **3 But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**

 There is no doubt that the Old Testament directly testifies to the need for a sacrifice to pay the price for man’s sin. However, starting with Cain, God did not take Cain’s life for the price of his sin. Yes, eventually Cain died which is the price we all pay for sin. God told Adam this outcome would take place if he rebelled against Him in Genesis 2:17.

 There are laws that God gave for capital crimes whereby the offender would be put to death. These are numerous. These penalties applied a punishment and removed the offending person from being a continued threat to society. We still do this today. It is clear there is a difference between the civil government applying punishment and a person’s decision not to be with God for an eternity. Many on death row surrender to the Lord, like the criminal besides Jesus. They lose their earthly life for the crime they committed but due to their surrendered heart to God they became heirs of the promise of eternal life by faith.

God does not send anyone to Hell. People choose to be separated from God. The defining distinction is that God has provided a way for all of us to be with Him for an eternity if we choose. What did God do to make this possible? He paid the price for our sin (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). From Adam and Eve and Cain forward, God has demonstrated that He does not want to take our lives. With the account of Abraham and Isaac, God provided a ram to be substituted for the “would-be” sacrifice of Isaac’s life. All of these points directly to the Cross’ substitutionary atonement. God chose not to place each of us on a Cross to pay the price for individual sin. God demonstrated His great love and compassion by standing in place of us and being our substitute sacrifice. This is the classical teaching of Christianity.

 Therefore, this substitutionary atonement is unique in the history of the world. No other belief system, religion or account of a god interacting with people possesses this reality.

Islam, in no way teaches that allah had compassion on his people and paid the price for their sin. In Islam, people’s good and bad deeds are weighed on allah’s scales at the end of a person’s life, and allah makes a decision for each person. However, islam also teaches that even though a person lives a perfect life, allah could, by his will, send that person to hell. From this, we see that allah does choose to send people to hell. The God of the Bible does not choose to send anyone to hell. They choose themselves. Remember, God does not want to lose one person (2 Peter 3:9). God allows free will choice to even allow people to be turned over to their own desires (Romans 2:18 ff).

 In contrast to Islam’s allah, who only spoke through angels to Muhammad, God has revealed Himself in different ways as in a burning bush or through angels and constantly speaking directly through prophets like Samuel and Moses.

We are assured the same faith that saved Abel and Abraham is the same faith that saves Paul and Peter and the Greeks and the Romans and all the people of the world. There is just the question of access.

How is faith accessed by a person? Ah, yes, what is the key to access God’s salvation, His eternal life door? People read Romans and the remainder of the Bible and have to think. . . wait, me too; what about me? I want to be included. Romans 4 provides the detailed plan of justification/salvation and contrast with justification by works/law.

**Romans 3:31** Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

CSB17 **Romans 4:**1 What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?

 2 If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about-- but not before God.

 3 For what does the Scripture say?

Abraham believed God,

and it was credited to him for righteousness.

 4 Now to the one who works,

pay is not credited as a gift, but as something owed.

 5 But to the one who does not work,

but believes on him who declares the ungodly to be righteous, his faith is credited for righteousness.

 6 Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the person to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

 **7 Blessed** are those whose lawless acts are forgiven and whose sins are covered.

 **8 Blessed** is the person the Lord will never charge with sin.

 9 Is this blessing only for the circumcised, then?

CSB17 **Psalm 32:**

1 *Of David. A Maskil.* How joyful is the one whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered!

2 How joyful is a person whom the Lord does not charge with iniquity and in whose spirit is no deceit!

3 When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long.

4 For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer's heat. Selah

5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

**Proverbs 28:13** The one who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy.

**Psalm 38:18** So I confess my iniquity; I am anxious because of my sin.

**Romans 4:9 continued. . .**

 Or is it also for the uncircumcised?

 For we say, Faith was credited to Abraham for righteousness.

 10 In what way then was it credited—

while he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?

It was not while he was circumcised, but uncircumcised.

 11 And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while still uncircumcised. This was to make him the father of all who believe but are not circumcised, so that righteousness may be credited to them also.

 12 And he became the father of the circumcised, who are not only circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith our father Abraham had while he was still uncircumcised.

 13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would inherit the world **was not through the law,**

 but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

 14 If those who are of the law are heirs,

faith is made empty and the promise nullified,

 15 because the law produces wrath.

And where there is no law, there is no transgression.

 16 This is why the promise is by faith,

so that it may be according to grace,

to guarantee it to all the descendants—

not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of Abraham's faith. He is the father of us all.

 17 As it is written: I have made you the father of many nations. He is our father in God's sight, in whom Abraham believed-- the God who gives life to the dead and calls things into existence that do not exist.

 18 He believed, hoping against hope, so that he became the father of many nations according to what had been spoken: So will your descendants be.

 19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body to be already dead (since he was about a hundred years old) and also the deadness of Sarah's womb.

 20 He did not waver in unbelief at God's promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,

 21 because he was fully convinced that what God had promised, he was also able to do.

 22 Therefore, it was credited to him for righteousness.

 23 Now it was credited to him

was not written for Abraham alone,

 **24 but also for us.**

It will be credited to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

 25 He was delivered up for our trespasses

and raised for our justification.

CSB17 **Romans 5:1** Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

AMEN