**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Sermon

*Romans Series - Chapter 14*

***Our Lives, Our Worship in Motion ~ The Believer’s Life***

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

November 17th & 24th  In the Year of Our Lord 2019

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS text is quoted)

Whatever Paul is going to say in Romans 14, he summarizes ~~up~~ in verses 17 and 19.

**17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking,**

**but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**

19 **So then** let us pursue the things

which make for peace

and the building up of one another.

It is understood that these (righteousness, peace, joy) are foundational beliefs that a person receives and possesses to establish their righteousness with God. Surrendering our hearts to God established our salvation. God then could work in us producing good works. We were then able to repent and witness our transformation to a new life in water-baptism.

Abel’s righteousness was witnessed in his “firstling” offering to God. Cain’s offering was delivered in contempt when Cain got around to making his sacrifice to God. Cain was a functionary believer. He acknowledged God but did not worship Him with his heart.

Obviously, ordinances regarding eating and drinking are not on the list ‘which makes for peace and building up one another’. What is on the list is righteousness, peace and joy. These are a few Spirit-led elements to the Believers life. Paul writes to the Galatians.

Galatians 5:18-26

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

19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,

20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

We can make another observation in the Ten Commandments (T.C.). The first five are a foundation to the last five. Do not have another God(s), do not erect idols or worship them, do not take the Lord’s name in vain, keep the Day of Worship for the Lord, and honor your parents. If a person lives life as planned by God under the first five then they will live life in accordance to the last five. The fifth commandment is instrumental in God delivering His plan to a person. Obviously, God chose parents to teach and guide children in understanding His plan for their lives. How to live is provided by God to parents who in-turn are to witness to their children.

Thus, the last five T.C. consisting of: do not murder, take another person’s spouse, steal, bear false witness and covet your neighbor’s possessions are easily kept.

The T. C. do not save us. We biblically observe there isn’t any work that can save us, as witnessed by Paul in Ephesians 2:8. The T.C. do not make us Christian. The T. C. are a work of faith, a product of the God’s Holy Spirit working inside of us.

**Key words Paul uses in chapter 14.**

Faith

Judge, Judgement

Dietary laws

Days to Observe laws

We live and die for the Lord

Judging fellow believers based upon observing days and diet

Serving Christ acceptable to God

**Too many rules and regulations.**

**Romans 14:1-23**

Eating meat sacrificed to idols. (1 Corinthians 10:23ff)

1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith,

but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

2 One man has faith that he may eat all things,

but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

3 Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat,

and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats,

for God has accepted him.

[See Jewish Dietary laws from Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 12, 14]

4 Who are you to judge the servant of another?

To his own master he stands or falls;

and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

The Jews had many days to observe. In Paul’s effort to break from the law, he teaches that it is okay not to observe all the Jewish religious days. He is talking to the Gentiles and the Jews. He does not want the Jews to hold it against the Gentiles who do not observe the holy days of the Jewish calendar. And, at the same time, he does not want the Gentiles to look upon the Jews (who do keep the holy days) as odd or in contempt. This is a good example of two people groups coming together in faith to God and having different traditions. One is more rigid and the other is unknowing. Paul makes it clear that a person is to be convinced in their own mind. But about all things pursued peace through the Lord and for the Lord.

**Regarding Days**

5 One man regards **one day above another**,

another regards every day alike.

Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.

6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord,

and he who eats, does so for the Lord,

for he gives thanks to God;

and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat,

and gives thanks to God.

**Live for the Lord**

7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself;

8 for if we live, **we live for the Lord,**

or if we die, **we die for the Lord;**

therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

9 For to this end Christ died and lived again,

that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

**Judging**

10 But you, why do you judge your brother?

Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt?

For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.

11 For it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me,

And every tongue shall give praise to God." (Isaiah 45:23)

**Individually responsible to God**

12 So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore,

but rather determine this—

not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

14 I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus

that nothing is unclean in itself;

but to him who thinks anything to be unclean,

to him it is unclean.

15 For if because of food your brother is hurt,

you are no longer walking according to love.

Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

**Do not let what others say bother you**

16 Therefore

do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;

**17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking,**

**but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**

18 For he who in this way serves Christ

is acceptable to God

and approved by men.

**Pursue peace and building each other up**

19 **So then** let us pursue the things

which make for peace

and the building up of one another.

**Do not purposely/knowingly give offense**

20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food.

All things indeed are clean,

but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.

21 It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine,

or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.

22 The faith which you have,

have as your own conviction before God.

Happy is he who does not condemn himself

in what he approves.

23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats,

because his eating is not from faith;

and whatever is not from faith is sin.

**Jesus declares all foods clean**

**Mark 7:14-23**

14 And after He called the multitude to Him again, He *began* saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand:

15 there is nothing outside the man which going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.

16 *"If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.*"

17 And when leaving the multitude, He had entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable.

18 And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him;

19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (*Thus He* declared all foods clean.)

20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.

21 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,

22 deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness.

23 "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

**Paul clarifies the eating of meat sacrificed to idols.**

**1 Corinthians 10:23-33**

23 All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.

24 Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.

25 Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake;

26 FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS.

27 If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake.

28 But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake;

29 I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?

30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?

31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;

33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.

**What religious practices today are hot buttons that divide the Church?**

**Water-Baptism**

Path of salvation or statement of faith?

Who has the authority to water-baptize?

Is water-baptism the same as spirit-baptism/reborn of spirit?

No. These are two distinct events. Spirit-baptism is the baptism for salvation that only God can do. Water-baptism is a symbolic act making public that God’s Spirit-baptism has taken place. Man cannot control spirit-baptism/reborn or spirit.

**Lord’s Supper**

Symbolic remembrance or a function to receive forgiveness of sin?

No person or organization has power to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus. Transubstantiation was invented by the Roman Catholic Church and was part of the Sacramental system stemming for the 4th Lateran Council of 1215 A.D.

**Speaking in Tongues**

Mandatory Evidence of salvation?

Holy Spirit chooses to whom to give or you can demand God give to you and you will receive?

1 Corinthians 12:11-14

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

**Priesthood of the Believer**

Each Believer has a direct path to God. There is no mediator or Church hierarchy through which to go.

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God,

5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

6 For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,"

8 and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

**Type of Worship music and what instruments allowed**

**Dress or attire in worship or church functions**

**Church building design, architecture**

**Preservation of the Saints**. The **conditional** preservation of the saints, or commonly conditional security, is the Arminian belief that believers are kept safe by God in their saving relationship with Him upon the condition of a persevering faith in Christ. However, a saved person can willfully recant and lose their salvation.

**Philippians 1:6** For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

**Perseverance of the saints** is a Christian teaching that asserts that once a person is truly "born of God" or "regenerated" by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, nothing in heaven or earth "shall be able to separate (them) from the love of God" (Romans 8:39) resulting in a reversal of the converted condition.

For those that are truly saved will not walk away from God as those did in John 6, which proved that they never did believe. Jesus said He knew them from the beginning. Jesus’ statement proves that people can appear to be saved, but, when challenged by God, they walk away like those in John 6. These had never received God’s Holy Spirit because they had not surrendered to God. They were pursuing their own idea of what a Messiah should be.

**John 10:19-31**

19 A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words.

20 Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?"

21 Others were saying, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?"

22 At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem;

23 it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon.

24 The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.

26 "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.

27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

30 "I and the Father are one."

**Church Hierarchy:**

**Job 33:23** "If there is an angel *as* mediator for him, One out of a thousand, To remind a man what is right for him,

19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

**Galatians 3:20** Now a mediator is not for one *party only*; whereas God is *only* one.

**1 Timothy 2:5** For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,

**Hebrews 8:6** But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

**Hebrews 9:15** For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

**Hebwers 12:24** and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel.

God gave the first covenant of Law to show people they could not keep the Law and they would have to turn to him. Thus, the Law was a tutor as Paul describes in Galatians 3:24). To be clear, the covenant of Law was never designed to remove sin (Hebrews 9,10,11).

The Law pointed to way to salvation. The Law was never the instrument of salvation. Salvation is based/founded on a Promise that a person is justified and made righteous by the faith of God working in them. Surrendering to the Lord makes this possible. In case anyone missed God’s declaration in Galatians 3 concerning the Law, that it was added 430 after the Promise was explained to Abraham, they can read for themselves. We continually go back to Abel, Adams’s son, and his righteous offering of faith that justified him to God. Again, Abel’s relationship with God, based upon faith, demonstrates that the covenant of faith was in place from the beginning. Faith is a spiritual disposition to willingly trust/surrender to God with your life. Adam and Eve were given the same opportunity. They chose to pursue Satan and His lies. The did not trust in God’s provision for their lives they pursued Satan’s offer when presented to them. So is the history of people. Adam and Eve also were given the opportunity to confess their sin. We see Eve thanking God for the birth of her children in Genesis 4:1. This indicates Eve did not stay disconnected from God.

**Galatians 3:17-29**

17 What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

20 Now a mediator is not for one *party only*; whereas God is *only* one.

21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

22 But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

**Version of the Bible to be read in worship service or teaching**

**Days of Worship**

**No meat on Friday. . . fish Friday**

**Blue laws**

Blue laws, also known as Sunday laws, are laws designed to restrict or ban some or all Sunday activities for religious or secular reasons, particularly to promote the observance of a day of worship or rest. Blue laws may also restrict shopping or ban sale of certain items on specific days, most often on Sundays in the western world. Blue laws are enforced in parts of the United States and Canada as well as some European countries, particularly in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Norway, keeping most stores closed on Sundays.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue\_law

Many of us have experienced someone telling us that we do not practice our faith the correct way. We have been looked down upon. I have actually been told that I am going to hell due to the way I was water-baptized.

I once told a man that Heaven was going to be a very quiet place for him. He said, “Why?” I replied that God did not want to hurt his feelings regarding who he thought would go to hell and would place him in his own sound-proof house so that he could not hear all the other people in heaven.

I said just a few weeks ago that God has His gate to heaven open 24/7 and 360 degrees. It is fallen humanity that determines the path, and the gate is narrow. All are guilty of sin (Romans 3:10, Ecclesiastes 7:20), and, at the same time, God calls all people to Him (Romans 10:13; Acts 2:21; Joel 2:32). God calls people to Him regardless of the circumstances in their lives. Jesus spoke to the woman at the well saying "Go, call your husband and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet (John 4:16-19), the tax collector had been collecting taxes corruptly and the criminal on the cross admitted he deserved his cross, but God as Jesus called to all of them in their current condition. The woman at the well was restored and went and told her neighbors, the tax collector became a disciple and the criminal on the cross went to be with the Lord in paradise

There were not any questions about their water-baptism being done correctly or their views regarding the Passover.

**God’s grace abounds in a conflicted fallen world.**

Despite all of man’s historical hierarchical institutions, who have built a highwall in front of God’s grace (by making themselves the gatekeeper), people starving for God’s love; still receive God’s love. God’s grace can penetrate every wall placed in its path. Regardless of people’s understandings and claimed observations, it is God who holds the Book of Life from the foundation of the world. No power on earth can change the Book of Life. No rule of Ecclesiasticism can defeat God’s universal/general salvation-call (Romans 10:13; Acts 2:21; Joel 2:32) and application of His atoning work on the Cross. There may be religious structures, that stand as a great bearer reefs to God’s calling, and atoning love, but there is no power greater than the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that sets us free from the law of sin and of death (Romans 8:2).

**It was March 14, 2002** when a thirty-five-year-old woman crashed her truck on a rural road near Lagrange, TX. Her roommate and the parents, who had adopted her at birth, were notified of the accident. Locals knew the truck was one she could have been driving. She was burned beyond recognition and the official confirmation of her identity had to be ascertained by her dental records. She had too much alcohol in her system but she was not under the influence of narcotics that she had been through rehab a few years before. She departed this life leaving a daughter, parents and many friends.

The prior Sunday she and her daughter had been in church here at the Christian Fellowship. During the opening prayer & praise time she openly stated how much she appreciated being here and felt at home. We could hear in her voice that she was reaching out to us. We could see that she knew she needed a church family to be with. I had also visited with her the prior week in my office when she told me of her life-story of drugs and the life-style that went with drug addiction. I found out later after her death, that she had been adopted from her birth mother who was a drug addict. As a baby, she came into the world with drugs in her veins. She was not proud of her life. She witnessed to me that she knew the Lord was her Savior and had accepted Him during her rehabilitation time. She was looking forward to growing in the Lord. She knew she had a long way to go but joining the church and seeking to be with mature Believers gave her peace. However, she still had relationships that pulled on her negatively. She had not matured enough to have the spiritual strength to break from all of her harmful relationships. She had pulled away from many of them but not all. She had come from such a dark place and had come along way.

She had accepted the Lord, but she, like so many, who struggle with their fallen humanity still live life somewhat confused. They make a surrender to the Lord and allow the Lord to work in them and at the same time fail to fully break away from their previous life. This is the most dangerous time for a Believer.

We see this in the New Testament. Like Peter, who followed the Lord all the way to His arrest and then ran away. Peter was given another opportunity but denied he even knew Jesus. No doubt, Peter had difficult choices to make. Peter eventually made a choice to speak-up for Jesus as evidence after Pentecost in Acts 2. Peter’s life, like so many others, demonstrates there is not always a clean break from the past. But Peter still loved the Lord.

Like Paul, who proclaimed the law of sin defeats him every time and he is powerless to defeat the law of sin in death at work in his body (Romans 7). Paul stated that sin deceived him (Romans 7:11) and he was doing the very thing he hates (Romans 7:15,16). Paul says that it is not him doing bad things but the sin in him that he does not want to do. Paul, the Believer, the Saint, the Apostle fails. So, Paul, at the same time, proclaiming his defeat proclaims his victory.

7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Romans 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, (Romans 8:2-3)

This means that even thought the Believer fails, Like David, Peter, Paul, Moses, Abraham and so many others we are set free from the penalty of sin and death into the graceful arms of God. I John 1:8-10 proclaims clearly that “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

These Scripture tell us that God anticipates the Believer to sin. However, we are to come to Him with our confession. These are sins that we do not intend to do. Sin grips us and torments us and as Paul says he does the things he hates. This is the Believers life. There are no sinless saints. We get up each morning and have God’s intent at work in our hearts then the struggles come. Some days we do better than others. But the lost, the fallen person, gets up each morning and does not have God’s intent working in their heart. Their propensity to commit sin is automatic. There is no governor on their heart and mind.

Now, back to the tragedy of a baby born with her mother’s street drugs running through her veins. I for one, believe that God takes a child’s birth circumstances into consideration. God considers, through His fair judgment, all the children, born mentally retarded or impaired physically through no action of their own. When we honestly look at the fallen human gene pool it is severely tainted.

A Few days after the automobile accident I received a phone call from the roommate of the deceased. I was asked to call the adoptive parents. I called them and we meet at the funeral home. We made the arrangements for the service. I agreed to assist in the officiating of the funeral service along with the pastors of the parent’s church.

The church was one where the pastors wore robes. From the tradition I came from, I would say they were liturgical and ecclesiastical, you know “High-Church.” Millions of people attend these churches. I obviously did not appear to be from their tradition as evidenced when the pastor asked me if I wanted to wear vestments (Robe). I thanked him and said “no.” He then said to me “I do not know you. You’re not going to turn this into a Billy Graham Crusade?” I said “no.” “I am going to share some things about her life.”

What I had learned from her parent’s concerning her adoption and birth, the community at large already knew. They had seen the girl grow up and become a troubled youth that eventually led to a life of drugs. She had left the community years ago but had come back a short time before she died. The community knew she had died in a D.W.I. accident. Understandable, her life ended as a predicable consequence of her choices. No doubt, Christian or not, we all receive the consequences of our choices, whether they be good or bad.

From my standpoint, through the lens of God’s love, we are all created in God’s image. We are His workmanship created for good works that God had planned for us before we were born (Ephesians 2:9,10). It is up to us to seek God’s plan for our lives. If we avail ourselves to God working in our lives, He will direct our course.

God knew us before we were in our mother’s womb (Jerimiah 1:5). God know all of our lives. What we will do what we think. God knows we “Believers” will sin. Why does 1 John 1 exist if God does not anticipate Believers sin? David had received the knowledge of truth yet he is considered to have followed the Lord with his heart 1 Kings 14:8. This is written after David died. The author who wrote 1 Kings for God knew of David’s sin with Bathsheba.

So, “let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (Hebrews. 10:23-26)

The young woman had come to assemble with Believers. She was looking to be encouraged by others. She had reached out to Gods’ Church. New Believers hold fast to the confession of their hope without wavering. What they wavier in, is not their belief that Jesus died on the Cross for their sins, but they wavier on their day-to-day struggles. They do not willfully go on sinning. They have not mastered the sin that operates in them, like Paul. And guess what? They never will. God is the power that masters sin in us. We have to spiritually grow to a place where we allow God to take the reins of our hearts when we are challenged. God had not grown in the young woman to the degree that sin was defeated are lessened to the degree that she was safe. But then, who has ultimate control over their lives. Believers sin, and God forgives (I John 1). Believers do the things they hate, like Paul.

When it came my turn to speak at the funeral, I could feel the 400 plus set of eyes fixed on me. Standing room only. People were lined up out the door. Her parents were deservedly well respected. The community had come to support them. I could see into the minds of those present, what they were thinking. . . “here is the preacher from Round Top who had recently met the deceased who we have known all her life.” This is the community who had witnessed a girl grow up to become a rebellious person bringing hardship on her parents who were good hard-working people with great standing in the community. And, all of that was true.

No body had been in my office to hear her confession and testimony how much she loved the Lord. That she had accepted Jesus as her Savior when she was in rehab. That through tears she called out for help and wanted the church to work with her where she was at in her life. She was the criminal on the cross. She made no excuse. She simply witnessed her life of sin and humbled herself to God.

Now all eyes and ears were attentive on what I was going to say. What could this preacher say? What could be understandable, reasonable and comforting, all at the same time. The reality is that I had no words of my own. I never will. But, what I did have was God’s

Luke 18:9-14

9 And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

**17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking,**

**but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**

19 **So then** let us pursue the things

which make for peace

and the building up of one another.

AMEN