**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Twenty-Ninth Week Since the Resurrection

 ***God Chooses to Be with***

***and***

***Work Through Fallen-Sinful People***

***Acts 9:32-43***

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November 1st In the Year of Our Lord 2020

(Unless otherwise noted, CSB17 quoted.)

**Acts 9**

**Aeneas Healed**

 32 As Peter was traveling from place to place,

he also came down to the saints who lived in Lydda.

 33 There he found a man named Aeneas,

who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years.

 34 Peter said to him,

"Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed,"

and immediately he got up.

 35 So all who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

**Tabitha (Dorcas) Raised from the Dead**

 36 In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which is translated Dorcas).

She was always doing good works and acts of charity.

 37 About that time she became sick and died.

 After washing her, they placed her in a room upstairs.

 38 Since Lydda was near Joppa,

the disciples heard that Peter was there

and sent two men to him who urged him,

 "Don't delay in coming with us."

 39 Peter got up and went with them.

When he arrived, they led him to the room upstairs.

And all the widows approached him, weeping and showing him the robes

and clothes that Dorcas had made while she was with them.

 40 Peter sent them all out of the room.

He knelt down, prayed, and turning toward the body said,

 "Tabitha, get up."

She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up.

 41 He gave her his hand and helped her stand up.

He called the saints and widows and presented her alive.

 42 This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

 43 Peter stayed for some time in Joppa with Simon, a leather tanner.

 **How can Peter do these things?**

1. **Jesus told Nicodemus to do the works of God**

**you must be reborn of Spirit.**

1. **Jesus told the Disciples. . .**

**John 14:11-18**

11 "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me;

otherwise believe because of the works themselves.

 12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me,

the works that I do, he will do also;

and greater *works* than these he will do; because I go to the Father.

 13 "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do,

so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

 14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*.

 15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

 16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper,

that He may be with you forever;

 17 *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive,

because it does not see Him or know Him,

*but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

 18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. (NAU)

**Mark 16:17** "These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues;

**Matthew 21:21** And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, it will happen.

**Matthew 17:20** And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

**Luke 10:17** The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

**Through God’s Holy Spirit, His Presence is Interactive with People**

**This is the main teaching in Acts - God at work in people.**

**How is this accomplished in fallen-sinful humanity?**

 Continuing our series in the acts of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of people, Luke abruptly turns from the account of Saul’s conversion back to Peter in verse 32. Taking a step back, we need to take note that God continuously works through people. This is a function of God’s Holy Spirit. God is not limited to be stuck in a lofty place pontificating commands down to earthlings. God sends Himself in Spirit form to indwell people. Nor did God create the world and sit back to only watch the show. God is not too delicate to be in the presence of sin. God is more than capable to work through and be in the presence of fallen-sinful people. To accomplish this, we will see that God reveals enough of Himself to be the catalyst for people who surrender to His will. God does not fully present Himself to people in order to protect people from His full glory; that would be overwhelming to us.

 Some Christians have quoted Habakkuk 1:13 in an effort to support their view that God cannot look upon evil.

13 Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness **with favor.** Why do You look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?

They link Habakkuk to Jesus’ words from the Cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” They teach that this is the point when Jesus took the sins of the world upon himself, and God the Father could not look upon Him. This is a traditional teaching from the evangelical branch of the church and has been presented by popular preachers who were well-intended. However, this teaching is not consistent and contradicts the Bible in many passages of Scripture. It is true that Jesus took the sins of the world upon His being, and the “whole” event of the Cross represents this fact. Consider these points:

1. God became flesh and lived with us (John 1:14). Therefore, God-in- the-flesh was in the presence of and looked upon fallen-sinful people for thirty-three-and one-half years.
2. Paul declares, “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.” (Galatians 2:20). So, God not only looks at and is in the presence of fallen-sinful people but also resides in their fallen-sinful bodies.
3. The context of the Habakkuk verse: The prophet is talking about his views about God, but, in the second half of the verse, Habakkuk admits that God does look on those who deal treacherously. Reading the first half of the verse 13, in full context, God cannot look upon evil “with” favor. Thus, leaving room for God to look upon evil “without” favor. Which is what God does all the time.
4. From reading Psalm 22, we see that Jesus, from the Cross, is referring to a prophetic victory song. Jesus is simply drawing attention to the verse to prove that the events proclaimed in the verse have come true. The fallen world thinks God has forsaken His Son, but, no, God is not that far-off. **Psalm 22:19**

19 But You, O LORD, be not far off;

O You my help, hasten to my assistance.

 20 Deliver my soul from the sword,

 My only life from the power of the dog.

 21 Save me from the lion's mouth;

From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.

 22 I will tell of Your name to my brethren;

In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

And remember what comes next… The 23rd Psalm.

 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me;

 Does not sound like God abandons Jesus.

**What’s Happening in Acts?**

 God did not abandon the Apostles. Here in Acts 9, there is an obvious transition from Peter to Paul in the narrative of the book of Acts. Remember that both men had serious character flaws, but God still sought after them and worked through them. Peter had denied and turned his back on Jesus three times at His most crucial hour. Paul was an enemy of God in his persecution of Believers in Jesus. This gives all people hope. Even though a person commits a serious sin, God still chooses to work through them.

While a major recruitment effort was on-going by God (Paul), He is still at work in others (Peter). Major events are happening at the same time. This is a major characteristic of God, in that His Spirit works in the lives of people simultaneously. God is not static. God is interactive around the world all the time. His Spirit assists us in living in this fallen environment. With God’s Spirit in us, we live through this fallenness. Obviously, we are still affected by the fallen environment, but, with His Spirit at work in us, we persevere.

**God’s Presence in Contrast to Other Faiths**

 God’s ability to be with us and work through us is in contrast to other faiths where their deity is distant and too lofty to engage people. We have several theophanies in the Old Testament where God interacts with people directly. God walks with Adam and Eve in the Garden (Genesis 3:8). God talks to Cain (Genesis 4), and Enoch walks with God (Genesis 5:22). God talks to Noah (Genesis 6), and Jacob/Israel wrestles with God (Genesis 32).

We could make a lengthy list of biblical citations where God directly interacts with people in some form. But there is one that stands-out - The Incarnation. The Incarnation is God’s ultimate “I can walk with you as one of you” (John 1:1,14). When John writes that the “Word was with God and the Word was God” and that the “Word became flesh and lived with us”, this is as declarative as it can be. God is so powerful and is not limited in His presentation or presence of His being. God **does limit** showing us His “full” majesty and glory because that would overwhelm us in our temporal state.

In Genesis 3, God does show himself in some limited way but only in a form not harmful to people. In Exodus, we receive a fuller explanation of God revealing Himself.

 **Exodus 24:9** Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 10 and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. 11 Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank. (NAU)

 **Exodus 33:20** But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" 21 Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; 22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. 23 "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen." (NAU)

**John 1:16** For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. 17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (NAU)

 The context of John 1:18 is in-line with Exodus 33:20-23. We also keep in mind Philippians 2:3-11. We must see the “earthly” context of Paul’s teaching here to the Philippians and to us. God is saying, through Paul, that we can never be God (Philippians 2:6), and, at the same time, God can become one of us (verse 7). In order for God to become (physically) one of us weak and diminished beings, He has to empty Himself and agree to take the form of a lesser being. One of God’s intentions in the whole Incarnation is to demonstrate for us that we too can live the life He has planned for us, but only with His spiritual indwelling. This is why Jesus said things like, “I can do nothing without the Father.” This is part of teaching the Trinity: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Here in Philippians, God has Paul focus on *selfishness* and empty *conceit* placing others *more important than ourselves*. This is what God as Jesus did by becoming one of us. God encourages us through Jesus’ example.

**Philippians 2:1-2**

1 Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

 The first two verses set-up the personal spiritual traits to what God calls us. These are all attributes of God as Jesus. He came to be one of us to show us that we, too, can have these attributes. God as Jesus modeled for us His intent for our lives and demonstrated to us that it is possible to attain, in our fallen state, the state of mind and spirit that God had planned for us from the beginning. God designed us to contain these attitudes and desires for us to adopt them (verse 5). This is exactly what Jesus modeled.

**Philippians 2:3-11 Attitude Like Christ**

3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit,

but with humility of mind

regard one another as more important than yourselves;

 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests,

but also for the interests of others.

 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

 6 who, although He existed in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

 7 but emptied Himself,

taking the form of a bond-servant,

and being made in the likeness of men.

 8 Being found in appearance as a man,

He humbled Himself

 by becoming obedient to the point of death,

even death on a cross.

 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him,

and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW,

of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

**Conclusion and Application in Our Time**

Now, who has taken on these attitudes of God? We have our successful days in the Lord mixed with not so successful days. We hope we have more successful days than not. Despite their flaws, God still chose to work through Paul and Peter. Yes, they did repent, which paved the way for God to work in them.

 In Christian history, Peter and Paul are the two leading Apostles. We have the records of their missionary work in the book of Acts and in the early Apostolic Fathers. God as Jesus told Peter and all the Apostles, they would do great works and that He would not abandon them. There are many passages of Scripture to highlight Jesus telling the Apostles and other disciples about the great works they would do in His name. This is all predicated upon having “no-doubt faith.”

What about God working through people who have a track record that is not so stellar? Can and will God work through or use them for His purposes? Saint or sinner, we all fall under the category of “Fallen from Grace.” Many of us know that God did “stir the spirit” of the Persian King Cyrus to release the Hebrew people from their Babylonian captivity (Ezra 1). We note that God chose to “stir the spirit” of a pagan king to accomplish His will. We have the Roman centurion who came to Jesus seeking for Him to heal his servant. This man was not even a Jew; he came from the Roman secular culture, but God chose to respond to Him and use his request to demonstrate His majesty (Matthew 8:5-13). In Romans 13:1-5, God speaks through Paul to identify that governments are created to be good and confront bad. The text does not say that the Government is necessarily Christian or Jewish. The text gives God’s intent for government to be good and confront bad. Government is to hold bad accountable. We pray that we have leaders in America that will pursue public policy that is good as God has defined good. And that they do not pursue public policies that are bad. Our system in America is for citizens to vote. As Believers in God, we vote for a government that will pursue God’s good. At the same time, we need to vote for candidates who will use government to bring wrath on the ones who practice evil.

**Romans 13:1** Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. 3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

 4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. 5 Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

We are a few days from the November 3, 2020 elections. I pray enough people see that God is working through President Donald Trump and will vote for him to receive a second term and pray for the future of America. Do I wish he was more diplomatic? Yes. Do I wish he would tone down the things he says? Yes. Do I see that he has lived a secular life? Yes. Do I see that he set-up one of his generals in the army to be killed in the front-lines of battle in order to cover-up the fact that he had impregnated the general’s wife while he was fighting the nations battles? No. King David did (2 Samuel 12). Do I see President Trump defeating America’s enemies and keeping the spoils of war for himself? No. King Saul did (I Samuel 15). Do I see President Trump marry hundreds of women and sustaining a stable of hundreds of concubines using public money to build them their own pagan houses of worship? No. King Solomon did (1 Kings 11). Christians and Jews hold-up at least two of these Kings (David and Solomon) of Israel as icons of faith. King Saul is the least exalted, if at all. Despite their great sin and failures, all three Kings did accomplish great things for God. Remember God anointed each of these kings.

 What do these biblical accounts tell us? The bottom line is - that God can work through flawed people as long as their spiritual rudder is directed in His general direction. Do Americans see God working through the Democrat National Party and their candidates? They teach and legislate for abortion-on-demand laws and the support of marriage between whatever you want it to be, in addition to attacking the Church on all fronts.

**In Contrast,** President Trump has repeatedly been in support of the Church and religious freedom. Here are two Executive Orders.

**Executive Order on Advancing International Religious Freedom**

**June 2, 2020**

Read entire order here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-advancing-international-religious-freedom/>

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

**Section 1.** Policy. (a) Religious freedom, America’s first freedom, is a moral and national security imperative. Religious freedom for all people worldwide is a foreign policy priority of the United States, and the United States will respect and vigorously promote this freedom. As stated in the 2017 National Security Strategy, our Founders understood religious freedom not as a creation of the state, but as a gift of God to every person and a right that is fundamental for the flourishing of our society.

**Executive Order on the Establishment of a White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative**

**May 3, 2018**

Read entire order here:https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-establishment-white-house-faith-opportunity-initiative/

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and to assist faith-based and other organizations in their efforts to strengthen the institutions of civil society and American families and communities, it is hereby ordered as follows:

 **Section 1.** Policy. Faith-based and community organizations have tremendous ability to serve individuals, families, and communities through means that are different from those of government and with capacity that often exceeds that of government. These organizations lift people up, keep families strong, and solve problems at the local level. The executive branch wants faith-based and community organizations, to the fullest opportunity permitted by law, to compete on a level playing field for grants, contracts, programs, and other Federal funding opportunities. The efforts of faith-based and community organizations are essential to revitalizing communities, and the Federal Government welcomes opportunities to partner with such organizations through innovative, measurable, and outcome-driven initiatives.

 **You be the judge.** Can God work, has God worked, is God working through President Trump?

We are not all going to be Mother Teresa or Billy Graham. I would have never been accepted in seminary based on the good and bad deeds I did in my life. However, I was willing to allow God to work in my life for His good. I see this in President Trump. AMEN