***God’s Life to Eternity***

**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Round Top, Texas**

**Pastor Matthew Diehl**

**September 27th In The Year of Our Lord 2020**

 Let’s open today’s service with the Lord’s prayer.

 All join and say. . .

 **9 Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.**

 **10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.**

 **11 Give us this day our daily bread.**

 **12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.**

 **13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.** AMEN

 **Matthew 6:9-13** (KJV)

As of late, we have lives passing before us and more to come. God said He would not leave us alone and will be with us to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). God promises that nothing will separate us from His love.

35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

 36 Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."

 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:35-39 (NAU)

 So, therefore. . .

 ***"Do not let your heart be troubled;***

 ***believe in God, believe also in Me.***

 ***"In My Father's house are many dwelling places;***

***if it were not so, I would have told you;***

***for I go to prepare a place for you.***

 ***"If I go and prepare a place for you,***

***I will come again and receive you to Myself,***

***that where I am, there you may be also.***

 ***"And you know the way where I am going."***

**John 14:1-4 (NAU)**

We are here today to honor God’s gift of life. We unite under God’s love and grace at a time when saints are ascending to join Him in Heaven.

God’s plans for our lives were made at the beginning of time. Believer’s names are in God’s Book of Life, the Lamb’s Book of Life, before the foundation of the World. In God’s perfect knowledge, God “foreknows” who will surrender to Him. God did not make anyone surrender their heart to Him. The Lord gives us “free will choice,” and we Believers have chosen to surrender to God.

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. **Romans 8:29-30** (NAU)

 Due to Believer’s surrendering to the Lord, we walk in the plans God has for our lives (Ephesians 2:10) that God prepared beforehand. This is evident in the fruit our lives produce. We become loving fathers/ mothers, husbands/wives, sons/daughters and a friend to many for all the world to see how the attributes of God work in our lives. This is God’s love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).

God knows that in this life we will never become perfect. God has provided for our shortcomings. God asks us to come to Him, seeking forgiveness of sin, and He is faithful to forgive us (1 John 1:4-10).

We are all a work in progress being conformed to the image of God/Jesus. We are God’s workmanship, saved by God’s Grace.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. **Ephesians 2:8-10** (NAU)

 Like John 14:1-4, the Gospel of Matthew also declares God has already prepared a place for us.

34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. **Matthew 25:34** (NAU)

 God also knows who will not surrender to Him. God already knows the names, from the foundation of the world, who will not receive Him (Revelation 13:8, 17:8) and whose names are not in the Book of Life.

**Why Temporal Life Ends and Eternal Life Begins**

Why do our temporal lives end? We are here today to respond to this question. You may find this hard to believe, but there is a biblical explanation that starts with God’s love. Remember that the biblical definition of God is that He is Love (1 John 4:8), and Love is a choice. Our lives are intended, by God, to emanate His love. In short, our temporal life ends because God made love a choice over sin and death and the things that are at war with each other in this fallen world.

 God does not promise that we live here in this fallen creation forever. Temporal death is a gift that we do not stay here in this fallen world. God promises eternal life with Him because we surrender to Him by faith (John 3:16). God calls to us through this chaos and says, “Turn to Me!” (Isaiah 45:22).

Everything is fallen in this creation including the biology that surrounds us, with which we struggle every day. We know that there is a constant battle in the cells of every living thing to stay alive in the midst of a fallen world that is at war with itself. This is why Paul wrote 2000 years ago that the whole creation moans and seeks to be released from this fallen environment (Romans 18:19ff).

God created us in His image (Genesis 1: 26) to live the life He has planned for us (Ephesians 2:10). That does not mean in His physical image but in His Spiritual image. We are spiritually wired to have a loving relationship with God and each other. At the same time, we have a spiritual choice to have a relationship with God’s enemies (namely Satan).

Where does this “choice for love” start? With Adam and Eve. From childhood, we are familiar with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden where God provided all their needs. Adam and Eve represent all of us. God had plans for Adam and Eve which was not to eat from the *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*. God specifically told Adam (giving him a choice) not to eat from this tree, and, if he did, Adam would die (Genesis 2:17). We all know Adam and Eve did choose to eat from the forbidden tree, and their eyes were opened to the world of rebellion and sin (Genesis 3). Adam and Eve did not physically die right away. In fact, Adam lived to be 930 years old. The real death came to Adam and Eve when they were separated from God and removed from the Garden of Eden. God said He did this so they would not eat from the T*ree of Life* and live forever (Genesis 3:22-24).

 **Wait, is not that what God wants us to do, live forever?**

 **Yes, but not in a fallen state, separated from Him for an**

 **eternity!**

Okay, from this point, in the account of the Fall of man, is the key eternal lesson that is often overlooked. This is where God’s love is demonstrated. Despite their rebellion, God provides an opportunity for Adam and Eve, for all of us, to choose to surrender to Him and receive the gift of the T*ree of Life* and live forever with Him in Heaven. God removed Adam and Eve from the Garden containing the *Tree of Life*, so, they, in their fallen state, would not eat from the *Tree of Life* and live forever in their fallen state separated from Him. Instead, God removed them from the Garden and gave them a choice to overcome their sin nature, by surrendering to Him. Thus, receiving God’s Spirit. Once God sees they have surrendered to Him, His Spirit came into their lives so they could live the life He originally planned for them.

7 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.**' Revelation 2:7** (NAU)

We all have this same choice as Adam and Eve. Believers have made their surrender to the Lord and strive to live the life God has planned for them. So, why do we die and leave the temporal fallen world? Remember, God is love, and love is a choice upon which to be called. Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:13).

Love is a choice to be chosen in the face of a fallen world. For there to be a choice for love, there must be a choice opposite of love. It is easy to choose to love someone when we are surrounded by wealth and health. Love is easy to extend when there isn’t any opposition. This is when love is a convenience. However, Godly love is chosen when there is opposition, when evil abounds, when there are other choices. Love would not be the love we know if it were not a choice.

When God created the world, He created “free will choice.” This means He built into the creation all the bad things that can happen to us. He built into our minds the ability to choose not to live the life He has planned for us. By this “choice” installed in the creation, every kind of evil and sin is unleashed for us to choose and be affected, because we live in a fallen environment. The whole creation calls to be set free (Romans 8:18ff). This is why *agape* love is the powerful choice for us to choose in the midst of this *fallenness*. God wants us to freely choose Him in the face of other options. So, in this fallen world, we have death all around us, but God calls us to come to Him. This is the price for having “free will choice,” but it provides for us the “choice” for victory in God for eternal life. Always remember that God made love a choice. This is why verses like Romans 10:13 are so powerful. When we call upon God, we are calling for His love, for God is love (1 John 4:8).

3 For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. **Romans 10:13** (CSB17)

There are three primary kinds of love in the Bible: p*hiladelphia* or brotherly love, e*ros* love (romantic/physical) and then there is a*gape* love. *Agape* love is the love a father has for his children, and God has for all of us. Rebellious or not, God extends His *agape* love to us. We see this at the Cross of Jesus when He says, “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). When a father raises his children, there are disappointments due to a child’s disruptive behavior. However, parents keep on loving their children in spite of their bad behavior. This is “free will choice.” The power of *agape* love overrides the disruption.

1 Corinthians 13 proclaims that a person can have great gifts, have knowledge and be charitable, but, if they do not have love, it profits them nothing. The passage continues to say that love is patient, kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, or act unbecomingly seeking its own, love is not provoked, nor takes into account a wrong suffered, and does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. **Love never fails**; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. (1 Corinthians 13:1-8). This passage describes God. God’s love is perfect and never fails. Remember that God is love (1 John 4:8).

Jesus was confronted by Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4). Satan offered to give Jesus the whole world, if He would worship him. None of the things Satan offered Jesus contained love. We, like Jesus, have all been tested, as Jesus was in the wilderness. Contrary to Jesus, we all failed. In recognition of our failing, we Believers accepted God’s grace gift of salvation in our hearts. We then entered into God’s life plan that He has planned for us (Ephesians 2:10).

 God allows us to be materially successful in life without Him. But then, there is the love of God we would not be able to extend to others. I ask you a question: Would you want to be a person who was highly successful in life without God’s *agape* love? This is the reason God created us in His image, to contain, experience and share His greatest gift of love.

God does not promise our temporal lives will survive. God calls for us to endure, exercising our “free will choice” for Him, in the midst of this fallen world. God does promise that His love saves us and endures.

The reality is – God’s love in the only thing with which we leave this world. We enter heaven with God’s love.

John 3:16 begins with “God so loved the world” and ends with “eternal life.” Love = Eternal life.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

To connect the two ends of this verse is “belief” and one GIFT of His incarnation, who went to the Cross to pay the price for our sins so we will not have to pay that price. God came and died, and He has planned that we all do the same. God does not require of us something that He has not done. And like God’s incarnation, as Jesus Christ, that led to his temporal death, we Believers will also die to rise to an eternal life.

Revelation 21:4 (NAU) and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

 **A Psalm of David - 23**

 1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

he leadeth me beside the still waters.

 3 He restoreth my soul:

he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil:

for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (KJV)

 AMEN