**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Eight Weeks till the Resurrection - April 4, 2021

***Why Is Jesus The Only Way? - Acts 19:8-10***

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted.)

8 And he entered the synagogue

and continued speaking out boldly for three months,

reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient,

speaking evil of the Way before the people,

he withdrew from them and took away the disciples,

reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

 10 This took place for two years,

so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord,

both Jews and Greeks.

We see that Paul continues to go to a Jewish Synagogue in the towns he visits. Paul does not stop witnessing to the Jews. He reasons to persuade them to accept the truth about the Kingdom of God. However, after three months, Paul was forced to shrink from the synagogue setting to a private location called the school of Tyrannus.

What was the school of Tyrannus? Scholars only speculate. We have an ancient text (manuscript D Syriac/Western text) with an additional comment saying that Paul taught there from the fifth hour to the tenth hour. Scholars speculate that this was a private school that Paul was able to rent or use that had nothing to do with Judaism or anything associated with Christianity.

Verse 9 tells us that some of the Jews became hardened and disobedient. This hardening and disobedience led them to speak evil of Paul and the people (the “Way”) who believed in what Paul was teaching.

**What was so offensive to the Jews?**

We know that the Jews had been looking and waiting for a “political” Messiah. Jesus rejected this assignment. Jesus was the “suffering servant” who came to die on the Cross for the sins of the world. A sharp contrast from the Jewish understanding.

**From reading Paul’s letters. . .**

we can get a good idea of his reasoning. Remember, Paul is talking in a Jewish synagogue. Paul’s challenge is to get them to accept two points; Paul constantly focuses upon O.T. Scripture to prove his points.

1. Right-standing with God is founded upon “Faith” not “Law”.
2. The Messiah, Jesus, by being crucified, is the One satisfying the Law’s legal requirement for the payment of sin.

**Where do we see Paul making the case for salvation free from the Law of Moses?**

Paul quotes O.T. Scripture (reasoning) throughout his talks.

**Romans 1:17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” Habakkuk 2:4

**Romans 3:9-18** 9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

 10 as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

 11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

 12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." Psalm 14:1-3, 53:1-3, Ecclesiastes 7:20

 13 "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, (Psalm 5:9)

WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,"

 "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"; (Psalm 140:3)

 14 "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; (Psalm 10:7)

 15 "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

(Proverbs 1:16)

 16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,

(Isaiah 59:7)

 17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."

 (Isaiah 59:8)

 18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

 (Psalm 36:1)

**Romans 4:1** What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 For 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 AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

(Genesis 15:6)

 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

 7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.

 8 "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT." (Psalm 32:1-2)

 9 Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Genesis 15:6)

**Where in the New Testament do we see Paul making a case for Jesus being the Messiah?**

**Romans 10:**6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down), (Deuteronomy 30:12,13)

 7 or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." (Proverbs 30:4)

 8 But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART "-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, (Deuteronomy 30:14)

 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

 11 For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." (Isaiah 28:16)

 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him;

 13 for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Joel 2:32)

**We have the same two teaching points today.**

1. Right-standing with God is founded upon “Faith” not “Law”.

**The Law has been substituted with denominational or religious institutional works, traditions and rituals**.

Many denominations have their own set of rules that are likened to the Jewish Law. Many denominations have achievements that must be accomplished to be in right-standing with them. Of course, they link their rules to being in right-standing with God. This is what makes them a mediator.

Personal faith between God and a person is mentioned in many religious organizations, but, at the same time, many mediating rules are placed in front of those seeking God. These mediating rules deal with water-baptism, the Lord’s Supper, holy days, music, dietary rules and the like.

Previously, I told my story about a paper I wrote in seminary regarding water-baptism. Some denominations require water-baptism to be a member and, at the same time, teach that water-baptism is not required by God to get into His heaven. This is due to Ephesians 2:8 and similar passages that proclaim, “by no work are you saved”. So, from some of these denominations, it is harder to be a member of a denomination than it is to get into heaven.

**Jesus made it simple.**

Love God and your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40; Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:8). Jesus said that "*On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets*." In Luke’s Gospel, a religious lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). Note here the question was directed at inheriting “eternal life”. Is this not the big question for humanity? Believers need to highlight Jesus’ discourse with the religious lawyer. This cuts through all the religious red tape. The verses from the O.T. are quoted in both dialogues. God made salvation simple. All the rules (The Law) were added due to the hardness (transgressions) of fallen humanities hearts (Galatians 3:19). I see God teaching an eternal lesson through the Law. You think you can be a perfect person without sin? Then keep the whole Law (James 2:10). Paul summarizes how to achieve keeping the whole Law in Galatians 5:14 when he writes “For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

By loving God, we humble ourselves to Him. Everything else the Lord desires for us to do falls in place. Starting with humbling ourselves to Him in love, we then can love our neighbor the way God wants. Therefore, Jesus said humble yourself to God and mourn for your sins, your neighbor’s sins and for the fallen condition of humanity. To be gentile, hunger and thirst for righteousness. To be merciful, pure in heart, pursuing peace, and that these who pursue and live such a life would enter the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:3-9). These have nothing to do with water-baptism or how a person takes communion or observes traditional holy days.

I see that God incarnated Himself as Jesus in order to come in the flesh and to tell us to remove any mediating barriers that religious institutions have in place. It is easily seen that mediating barriers have been placed to create a since of fear. Remember, there is no fear in the love of God because God is love (1 John 4). Intended or not, mediating barriers communicate to a person that if they do not participate or complete certain tasks, their sins are not forgiven, and they are not in right-standing with God.

By Jesus going to the Temple and confronting the religious leadership, he was not only overturning their money-changing tables, He was overturning their entire organizational structure. Instead of them becoming a guide and a light for the people that God placed with them to shepherd, they became religious rulers with overburdening edicts. Jesus ‘called them out’ in public for what they were doing. This is another reason the Temple Priest pushed to have Jesus crucified. Jesus taught that people do not need the “Temple-Priest-System” to have a saving relationship with God. The overall teaching from the book of Hebrews is that Jesus is the High Priest and the Holy of Holies, the place where Believers meet God to receive forgiveness of sin. We “tabernacle” with God/Jesus in our hearts. The whole sacrificial system was intended to be an object lesson pointing to God’s grace and mercy (Galatians 3:24).

“Substitutionary atonement” is seen with Abraham, as he was to sacrifice Isaac. God’s great love never runs out of forgiveness, as long as we humble ourselves to Him. This is why Jesus starts the Beatitudes with those who are *poor in spirit* will inherit the kingdom of Heaven. It is unfortunate that many religious systems today represent the structure Jesus spoke against. The religious leaders in the Jerusalem Temple were not poor in Spirit. Therefore, Jesus pronounced. . .

**Matthew 23**:4 "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. 5 "But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.

**Matthew 23**:13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

 14 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

 15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

**The Second point is also a challenge today.**

1. The Messiah, Jesus, by being crucified, is the One satisfying the Law’s legal requirement for the payment of sin.

**Jesus is the only way.**

 To many who see “faith” as a belief in *whatever you want your god to be,* Jesus the Messiah is just one of many or a person who represents one of many paths to a god.

The acceptance of Jesus as the one and only “WAY” to heaven is ‘frowned upon’. Popular secular culture demands that no one has an exclusive route to heaven. The reality that each person owes a debt to God for sins is a foreign concept.

It is my view that the Church is partially responsible for popular culture rejecting the idea that sin must be addressed. To some degree, the Church has been invaded by non-biblical teaching and has created their own religion. They still call themselves Christians but do not teach or preach biblical truth. Additionally, the Church has placed themselves as a mediator. Those of us who know Scripture know that God declares that there is only One Mediator, Jesus Christ.

For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Many religious orders have placed themselves as the gatekeepers to forgiveness and heaven. This is a not an attractive avenue to God. It is not personal but institutional.

God desires for us to seek Him directly for the forgiveness of sin, from a contrite heart. Last Sunday, we read from Psalm 51 and Hebrews 10. Both of these passages from God’s Word declare that sin cannot be removed through the works of sacrifice or works of any kind. David declares that God calls for confession of sin through a contrite heart (Psalm 51). This points to Jesus’ Beatitudes. Humble yourself to God and mourn for your sins (Matthew 5:3,4).

Believers need to be able to explain why Jesus is the only way. What makes this challenging for people is the knowledge of humanity being created thousands of years before the Incarnation. How was someone supposed to know about Jesus in every people group around the world? It does not make sense that God would create people in His image to be born on a distant continent (and time) with no opportunity to hear about Jesus. But then what does God declare through the apostle Paul in Romans 1:18-20? (see also Romans 10:18-21)

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

It is evident that God holds us responsible for what we know. In our time, most people cannot read Hebrew or Greek, but in our time, God worked through people to translate His Word into a language we can understand. Written language is not the only way God can communicate. We see God as Jesus perform miracles of healing and control the laws of nature by walking on water. God communicated through famine in plagues in the Old Testament. We do not know how or when God revealed himself to all who have lived since the creation of the world, but He did.

 Believers need to point to Revelations 20:11ff that reveals that Jesus is the Judge at the *Great White Throne Judgement*. This makes perfect sense due to John’s Gospel when Jesus declares, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me*.” (John 14:6)

Jesus’ words in John 14 make biblical sense forecasting to the *Great White Throne Judgment.* Considering Romans 1:18ff, we need to be accurate. All people have a chance to know God and surrender to Him. All people have a chance to call upon the Lord and be saved. We see this in Romans 10. All three references below (Romans 10:8,11,13) are quoted from the O.T. The O.T. people did not know the name “Jesus”. They knew “Yahweh”.

 Paul was presenting Jesus as Yahweh. Thus, in Romans 10:9, we can accurately witness “*that if you confess with your mouth Yahweh as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Himself from the dead, you will be saved*. God holds us accountable for what we know. God holds us accountable for what He has communicated to us. Not all people receive the same information because of their geographic location and/or the times in which they live. If you have received knowledge that the incarnated God, known as Jesus, was sacrificed on the Cross for the sins of the world and raised from the dead - then you need to accept that event. This confession leads to salvation.

I see some Christians and their leaders quote Romans 10:9 as if a person, for whatever reason, did not know this passage or was not able to quote this passage and adhere to it in the context of the 1st century - then they would not be saved. If that is the case, then those Hebrews hearing the Deuteronomist, Isaiah, and Joel would not be saved.

**Summation -**

We need to be careful in our witness. God is the God of the illiterate, the blind, the deaf & dumb, the retarded and the ignorant. We are aware that many will “knowingly” reject God. At the same time, we know that God does not want to lose one person (2 Peter 3:9).

**Romans 10:8-13**

8 But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART " (Duet. 30:14) -- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,

 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

 11 For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." (Isaiah 28:16)

 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him;

 13 for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Joel 2:32)

**Another reason Jesus is the only way.**

 To the Jews, the Law had to be satisfied concerning the need for the spilling of blood to forgive sin. Jesus said that He came to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17). We know and need to teach that Jesus did this by being the perfect unblemished sacrifice (substitutionary atonement) upon the Cross. This is a witness to the Jews and to everyone. We need to explain that Jesus was substituted for us. God’s love and grace extends to us the offer for another person (Jesus) to stand in our place and pay the price for our sins. This is why Jesus is the only person able to accomplish this for all humanity. However, God calls for a surrendering heart to Him in order to access the saving benefit of the Cross. This passage in John joins the salvation in the O.T. to be tied directly to Jesus.

**John. 3:13-15**

13 "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

 14 "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; (Numbers 21:9)

 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. **AMEN**