**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon Series**

**Paul’s Letter to The Saints in Ephesus**

*Chapter 1:6 – 10*

*God’s Grace ~ The Christ-Credit ~ The Road to Our Redemption*

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(Unless otherwise noted, CSB17 is quoted - Christian Standard Bible)

 We recap Ephesians 1:1-5 to provide context to verses 6-10.

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will: To the faithful saints in Christ Jesus at Ephesus.

 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

 3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ.

 4 For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him.

 5 He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

In review of last week’s sermon - God chose all people, this includes Adam, Cain, Pharoah, Herod and Judas, to be saved ‘from before the foundation of the world’, but He allowed us to choose Him by surrendering to His will and plan for our lives. We see this in Genesis 2:17 when God gave Adam a choice to eat or not eat from the forbidden tree. Once we surrender to God, we are predestined to glory. Verse 4, read in correct context of God’s will for all of our lives, states that from the foundation of the world God chose us to be holy (set apart for a relationship with Him) blameless in love before Him. This highlights God’s intended will for our lives, not a dictator ‘no-choice’ mandate. This “choice environment” is created in order to give us the ability to choose the law of love over the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1).

 In all of Paul’s missionary journey’s, he lifts-up the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as the pivotal point in God’s redemptive acts for humanity. Paul continues the same witness in the letter to the Believers in Ephesus. He points to the most important mission of the Incarnation and identifies what actually took place – “the Road to the Redemption”.

God’s grace to us with all wisdom and understanding. . .

---🡪 lavished on us through the Beloved One

---🡪 availing us redemption through the blood of Jesus’ Cross

--- 🡪 leading to Resurrection of God Himself as Jesus for us.

6 to the praise of his (God) glorious grace

that he (God) lavished on us in the **Beloved One** (JC).

 7 In him (JC) we have redemption **through** his (JC) **blood**,

the forgiveness of our trespasses,

according to the riches of his (God) grace

 8 that he richly poured out on us

with all wisdom and understanding.

This is a spiritual road. A journey that only God could accomplish. We see here that Paul spells-out that God lavished His grace on us, calling His presence as Jesus “**The Beloved One**” (v. – 6). So, why is Jesus to be loved? In verse 7, Paul points directly to God as Jesus who is the one who brings redemption for the forgiveness of our trespasses. This forgiveness is made possible through Jesus’ **blood**, an obvious pointing to the Cross.

You and I, as Believers, may find Paul’s words redundant. However, in his day, the Incarnation and Resurrection are new. People had to listen to what Paul said. Today, this information is not new. But we are challenged to accurately teach the validity of the Incarnation and Resurrection in the midst of a materialistic/naturalistic worldview. This is why we need to be informed about the latest findings from real scientists. We have presented these scientists and their work recently, so no need to list them again here. It is enough to say that our creation’s presence is beyond our comprehension, and there is not any infallible materialistic explanation for our existence and the miracles of the creation itself, being life and life’s origins, the Incarnation and Resurrection. This leaves the best possible understanding to reside in the Bible - God did it!

**Understanding Reasons for God’s Incarnation/Resurrection**

God knows our weakness. So, He incarnated Himself as one of us in order to show us that it is possible, with His Holy Spirit inside our hearts, to have victory and be eternally saved from an existence of unforgiveness, bitterness, regret and life without love.

When we witness Ephesians 1 to another person, there may be some questions about what Paul is saying concerning words like “**redemption through His blood**”. Believers have a spiritual context and Biblical framework to understand these words. To us, this is an obvious statement pointing to the Cross and the Resurrection. In our Western world, we have so many choices concerning spirituality. We need to be able to differentiate Christianity from the fallen world. Therefore, we might consider enlightening explanations. Consider the following . . .

**Our Witness**

**“What Must We Do?”**

**No** other human being in all of mankind’s history could or did accomplish the work of “The Cross” but God incarnated as Jesus. The fact is, there is not any religion, ever, on the face of the earth, whereby someone sacrificed their life to pay the price of all human sin (1 John 2:2). Yes, people have died for others in war and other circumstances. But God as Jesus the Messiah/Christ went to the Cross to pay the universal price of sin. Everyone’s “sin account” instantly had a zero balance. But wait – how do I benefit from the zero balance, this eternal **Christ-credit**?

Every religion in the world, save Christianity, demands that a person pay their own way through meritorious works to gain access to heaven or a better reincarnated life. None of the pagan gods offer to take the place of a person and pay their debt for sin. They position meritorious works to gain passage to heaven, nirvana or to an after-life of bliss with multiple intimate partners.

Have you ever come to a point in life when you cried to God – “What must I do?” You may not have thought those exact words, but all believers have come to a point in life where there was a *meeting-with-Jesus-experience* like those Jews in Acts 2.

**Redeeming the Christ-Credit**

 When I was a boy, my brothers and I would watch my mother collect *green stamps*. When she bought groceries or gas and other things, participating retailers would give her green stamps. When all the pages of the *green stamp* book were filled, she could redeem them as credits to purchase household items from the Green Stamp catalogue. Mom was somewhat religious about maintaining those green stamp books.

Many people go through life collecting religious merit badges like *green stamps,* in the belief that one day they will have accumulated enough credit to be in proper relationship with God. All but Biblical Christianity require you to collect *green stamps.*

The Bible does not teach that we should keep a salvation-credit-book. God does not record meritorious works, and when they add up to a certain amount. . . bingo . . . you are saved. Manmade religious institutions can operate this way. And by doing so - they have made a lot of money and have kept people feeling guilty all their life. Because once you reach the salvation amount, you must continue adding to your meritorious book to retain your salvation status with the Man upstairs.

The **Christ-credit** is redeemed through a heart-surrendering spiritual capitulation to God. In Acts 2:37, the infamous cry from torn hearts (circumcised - Deut. 30:6) “What must we do?” is heard around the world after the Pentecost event.

This was a call to Peter as he preached by the power of the Holy Spirit the conviction of the Holy Spirit to the Jews in Jerusalem who crucified Jesus. The Jews who called-out made an unconditional surrender to God. They were then capable of repenting and became eligible to witness their new status by water-baptism and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit which came to indwell them. This spiritual indwelling becomes the Believer’s spiritual-badge-living . . . of love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Make no mistake, the “cry-out” to God “What must we do?” from these Jews was the capitulation point at which they accessed their sin-accounts with a zero balance. Their debt to God was canceled. All of this is an extension of God’s “redemptive grace” paid by God as Jesus on the Cross at Calvary.

**Key Biblical Word to Understand - Propitiation**

**Strong’s 2435 ἱλαστήριον** *hilasterion* **Meaning:** from *2433*

**Origin:** from **ἱλαστήριος** *hilasterios* **Usage:** mercy seat, propitiation

**Notes:** *a propitiatory sacrifice /* Lit *because of the passing over of the sins previously committed in the forbearance of God*

1 John 2:2; 4:10; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 2:17, 9:14, 9:28;

1 Peter 1:19; Revelations 1:5; Romans 2:4; Acts 14:16; 17:30

**Romans 3:25** whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; (NAS)

**Hebrews 2:17** Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

**1 John 2:2** and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world. (NAS)

**1 John 4:10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. (NAS)

Several times, Paul summarizes what God has afforded us. Here in Romans is a great statement teaching God’s actions to make redemption possible in our lives and place us on an eternal path to a life with God after our lives temporally end.

**Romans 3:22-26**

22 The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, since there is no distinction.

23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

24 They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

25 God presented him as an atoning sacrifice in his blood, received through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed.

26 God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.

Of course, the debt paid on the Cross by God as Jesus would not have any value unless there was the Resurrection. The God of creation, The God who has the power and authority to create life, has the power and authority to resurrect life. In addition, God has the power and authority to pour-out His grace and mercy paying our debt for sin (at the Cross) and, at the same time, demonstrating His victory over the power of sin and death by walking “out of” a tomb.

There needs to be clarity at this point. Sin and death never had power and authority over God. God allowed people to choose to operate their lives under sin and death, demonstrated by Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. God did not create sin and death. People create sin and death by their free-will choices.

God’s demonstration of His eternal mastery over sin and death was demonstrated by Him as Jesus when He walked from the empty tomb. This is our visual that we can see in our minds that took place 2000 years ago. This is the “High-Noon” event in History. Satan could only standby and watch. Since that time, Satan has tried to convince the world that the Resurrection never happened.

The Jewish leadership only had to produce the body of Jesus to prove His death. The Roman guards only had to make sure Jesus did not leave His burial tomb. The Jewish and Roman authorities had all the earthly power/authority to make sure the “dead Jesus” stayed dead and remained in His tomb. But they could not. Instead, we have the eyewitness accounts of women. Of all the witnesses a heavy patriarchal society could produce, the unlikeliness of women being first eyewitnesses to testify Jesus greeting them highlights the accuracy of the event. Then there are the apostles and many others who lived witnessing what they saw and dying in martyrdom, because they would not recant what they saw.

 9 He made known to us the mystery of his will,

 according to his good pleasure

that he purposed in Christ

 10 as a plan for the right time—

 to bring everything together in Christ,

both things in heaven and things on *earth* in him.

**Greek Dictionary [GING] Mystery - μυστήριον**

secret, secret teaching, mystery with reference to something previously unknown but now revealed / Mark 4:11; Romans 11:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7; 13:2; 15:51; Ephesians 3:3f, 9; Colossians 1:26f; 4:3; Revelation 10:7.

 Do not let the word “mystery” (Greek *musterion)* complicate your understanding. This word simply means that prior to the Incarnation people did know the full redemptive acts of God. The Jews had Genesis 3 and Isaiah 53 (and others) forecasting some of God’s plan, but this was only a partial view. Once the Incarnation, ministry years, arrest, trial crucifixion, resurrection and ascension took place, people could clearly see God’s will at work. What happened became widely known. So, “mystery”, simply points to God unveiling His will through the life of Jesus Christ, as the centerpiece in human history highlighting His purpose in a redemption-path.

Verse 10 points to the sovereignty of God in choosing the right time to incarnate Himself as one of us demonstrating His power over the creation, sin & death and the power/authority to create life and resurrect life. By going to the Cross, God demonstrated His power/authority to forgive sin to the worst of sinners. The people who crucified Him were eligible for forgiveness as evident in Acts 2. From the Cross, Jesus proclaims,*"Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing." And they divided His clothes and cast lots.* (Luke 23:34)

Some have made the observation that God waited a longtime to incarnate Himself, in a reference to the distance in time back to the Creation, Adam and the Fall. However, considering world population growth, many more people have lived after the Cross than before the Cross. After the Industrial Revolution started in earnest, in the later part of the last millennium, the world’s population has skyrocketed.

The Incarnation of God, as an event, did provide that pivotal point in human history giving all people a temporal and Divine reference to the meaning of life.

16 "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.

 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

 18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

 19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

 20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

 21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

 (John 3:16-21 NAU) **AMEN**