**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**God Is in Control**

*Part Two – Sin in the World*

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

**We turn to the Bible in our understanding of “God is in control”.**

We have stated previously that “God is in control” but not like most people think. When I hear people say, “God is in control”, in the face of calamity. . . I say to myself . . . I think, I know what they mean . . . they want the right thing to happen even though evil is taking place. . . they want God to do something about the situation. . . meaning they want His justice applied. At least, they know God has the power and authority to act. They are powerless to affect the calamity. . . they turn to God, which is a natural response.

The Bible contains Scripture illustrating God’s justice.

**Psalm 110:1** A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

This is also cited in the New Testament in Acts 2:35 and Luke 20:43.

The Bible ends in the “Revelation” given to John, which is a declaration about God’s justice, judgement and calling all things and everyone into account for an eternity. It is natural for Believers to turn to God to claim and apply His control over any situation in life.

**God’s Judgement Allowed WWI and WWII**

 **Mankind Received Their Own Harvest**

We can assume that Jews caught in the Nazi Holocaust prayed to God to be delivered from their oppressors. We know that over six million Jews along with five million people from other groups were murdered by the Nazis. Did God hear their prayers? Why did God allow their suffering and unjust treatment? Was God in Control of WWII?

Man’s choice to sin creates all wars. War is the product of one or more parties violating God’s law of love for your neighbor. God’s love allows people to choose to be outside of His control.

As devastating as WWI was, its ending (Treaty of Versailles 1919 A.D.) led to WWII which was more devastating. The Versailles document enslaved the German people to war reparation payments to the Allied powers. They soon rebelled. These punitive payments were one of the humiliating factors that lead to WWII. The victors of WWI were too punitive. These payments were not structured to reconstruct. This built great resentment with the German people against the Allied powers. The suspension of the payments was nationally supported under Hitler, when Germany stopped paying reparations. After WWII, Germany’s war reparation payments were restructured so they could have a growing economy and not rebel again. The Marshall Plan allowed Germany to have an economic future, thereby, diminishing the outbreak of future war. It is of note that the reunified Germany finally paid-off war reparation payments on October 3, 2010 A.D.

<https://www.history.com/news/germany-world-war-i-debt-treaty-versailles>

It is my opinion, that “one” of the main factors leading to WWII and the rise of Hitler, and the murder of millions of people, lays at the doorstep of the Allied powers. Germany’s WWII campaign might have been avoided if the judgment of the victors would have been more reconstructive at the Treaty of Versailles and other treaties that carved-up Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Proof of this observation is how the aftermath of WWII was managed. War has not resumed and both Germany and Japan are good economic trading partners with the West.

**Jeremiah**

God allowed nations to manage their treaties that fed the fuels of war in a people who eventually rebelled creating WWII. In most of history, God allows nations and people to reap the harvest they plant. One of the clearest accounts of this is in the life of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah (627-560 B.C.) prophesied during a time of Judah’s rebellion from God. In the end, God allowed Judah to be conquered by the Babylonians. The Temple in Jerusalem that Solomon built was torn down and the people deported. Scholars believe Jeremiah was escorted by associates to Egypt to escape the Babylonians. He continued to prophesy to the Jews in Egypt but was rebuked by them and stoned to death. Some traditions hold that Jeremiah was sawed in-two. God allowed the Jews to control their own affairs and receive His just judgement of their actions. God allowed the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and exile the Jews to Babylon. Even the prophet Jeremiah did not escape harm.

 What do we learn from the life of Jeremiah?

We learn that God’s judgement affects the just and the unjust. God’s own prophet (Jeremiah) was executed by his own people who had rebelled against Him.

We also see there is always a remnant of God’s Believers. Most people are familiar with the Great Flood in the time of Noah. Only eight people were saved to be a remnant. God spared Lot’s family to be a remnant when He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

 These judgements serve as a pruning in the general population and within the Hebrew/Jews. Jesus uses the symbolism of a *gate* to demonstrate that people’s life-choices bring judgment upon them when He taught. . ."Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (Matthew 7:13-14 ESV)

 Isaiah the prophet wrote . . .For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, Only a remnant within them will return; *A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness* (Isaiah10:22). We observe in this Isaiah passage that God’s judgement brings righteousness. God always has preserved His remnant group to carry-on His Light. It is easy for me to see that in our times, we, too, serve as a remnant of God’s people. Being within this remnant, we also will go through hard-times and some of us may die (martyred), like Jeremiah.

From our experience and observations in life, we see that God allows evil to take place. He allows illnesses, wars, plagues, natural disasters and all types of *destructive-to-life* calamities to take place. I preached a sermon about a year ago addressing the question – “Why do bad things happen”? In that sermon, free-will-choice and love as a choice, were identified as part of God’s designed creation. God created a world for us to have the choice to choose Him over other choices. These other choices are for evil/bad, sin and death. We see this in Adam & Eve in their decision to go against God’s plan for their lives. God did not create bad and evil; He gave people the freedom to practice bad and evil. True, God knew/knows that Satan can present bad & evil to tempt/test. Adam and Eve were the first people Satan was successful in testing/tempting their hearts away from God. But when God came in the flesh as Jesus, the Messiah, Satan failed to draw Jesus away from God. Jesus’ “full humanity” demonstrated for us mere humans - that surrendering to God, and having His Holy Spirit guiding our decisions, Satan can be defeated. This is when we see God in control.

We have spiritual battles. In the “test in the wilderness”, Jesus directed us to our eternal goals versus temporal goals of pleasure, power and wealth. Jesus refused to accept Satan’s offer of temporal power, wealth and possessions in exchange for worshipping Satan. Jesus, that is God in the flesh, knew that in the end - Satan would be judged and this fallen world will fade away. God is in control.

**No Promise of Long-Life**

**No Promise to be Spared from Hard Times and Persecution**

We know that God does not promise Believers a long life or to be spared from persecutions, calamities. (Text below from ESV)

**Proverbs 27:1** - Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.

**Psalms 90:10** - The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

**James 4:13-15** - Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”

**Ecclesiastes 9:11** - Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.

**Luke 12:19 - 23** 19And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."' 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'

**Matthew 6:33-34** - But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

 **Psalm 118:24** - This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

**Creation Waits for Redemption**

We know that creation is fallen and waits for the day of redemption. Paul encourages us to look to the future, to the next life with God, which will be for an eternity.

**Romans 8:18-22** 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

**All Have Opportunity to be Saved from this Corruption**

We know that God created people in His image to have free-will choice. This means that all people from the beginning had the opportunity to surrender to God or not (Romans 1:18ff). We have repeatedly read the account of God giving Adam a choice to eat from the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:17) representing all humanity.

**Believers Caught-up in God’s Judgement**

Here is a thought. Is it possible for faithful Believers to be caught-up in God’s judgement of a larger people group that live around them? The prophets in the Old Testament, like Jeremiah, prophesied about God’s judgement to come, and they were in the middle of the people God was judging. When judgement came, Jeremiah’s life was affected as God’s judgement impacted the larger sinful group. We may be in a similar time, and like Jeremiah will have to endure through hard times or devastating times. We have the grace and peace of the Lord at work in our hearts and mind through which to carry us.

**Learn about God’s judgement from the book of Job**

**Who was in control of the God’s court in Job 1? God.**

**Job 1:6-7** 6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. 7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

This is consistent when Satan was depicted as the serpent in Genesis 3, when Eve followed Satan’s temptations. God is always the greatest authority, but, under His authority, He allows people to make their own choices…like a parent allowing a child to make their own choices. Often times this freedom of choice for a child, and people, ends in disaster as revealed with Adam and Eve’s rebellion in Genesis 3.

 Job 1 is one of the most revealing episodes in the Bible. This is where the sons of God and Satan came to present themselves before the Lord. Notice that God is in control of the meeting. Some theologians call this “God’s Court”. God initiates the questions to Satan. It is obvious that Satan is subordinate to God. This passage of Scripture details that Satan is present and “roaming about on the earth”. God allows Satan to roam and walk on the earth knowing that Satan will have the opportunity to tempt people away from Him. This is a demonstration of God’s great love.

**Love is a Choice Over Adversity**

We know that God is love and love is a choice over adversity. God chooses to love all people and calls for all people to respond to Him - by surrendering their heart to His love. Then God’s Spirit can indwell a person and guide their life. This is one of God’s greatest gifts to us . . . that we are allowed to choose Him in the midst of other choices. Thus, Satan is allowed to roam the earth presenting alternative choices from God. God desires for all people to freely choose Him. For there to be a free choice, there must be an alternative from God. God built this into the creation. God allows us to choose to have Him control our lives or Satan. God is always in control – in that, He chooses to give us the ability to make the choice. If Satan was in control as a creator, we would not be allowed to have a choice.

Evil does not want people to have a choice. Evil only presents one side and seeks to destroy all other options. This is seen in governments, controlled by Satan, who seek to destroy all opposition. These governments only want one voice to be heard. . . theirs. This is why godless communist governments do not have a free press. This is why many media outlets in the West, who are controlled by godless puppeteers, only produce godless socialist/communist propaganda. Socialism/Communism seeks to extinguish the voice of God all over the world. They may allow a state-run version of some kind of religion, but not on its own authority.

**Who was in control of God, as Jesus, in the test in the Wilderness (Matthew 4)? No One but God.**

 God, as Jesus, had endured forty days & nights in the wilderness and was at one of the weakest points physically and psychologically that a human could be. Who was in control of the wilderness journey? Who set-up the conditions in which Satan was allowed to operate? The Spirit of God.

 **Matthew 4:1** Then Jesus was **led up by the Spirit** into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to Him. . .

God set-up Satan to be defeated. God was in control. Satan thought that when God became man, and walked as a human, with all the challenges, trials and tribulation life brings - at Jesus’ weakest point, He would succumb to temptation. It is understandable Satan would try this temptation/test because he was successful with Adam and Eve. They were not at their weakest point when Satan tempted them. From Satan’s view, Jesus’ wilderness journey made Him weak and vulnerable.

 However, with God in the flesh as Jesus, and in control of the situation, the table was turned. Even in the weakest of human conditions, with God indwelling a human body - Satan was rebuffed. God, as Jesus, refuted Satan and quoted Scripture. Satan was powerless. When Satan thought he could control the situation, he approached Jesus. However, it was actually God who was in control of the environment. Satan walked into God’s control and lost.

 With God indwelling our hearts, we, too, can thwart the Devil and his schemes.

**Who was in control of the Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion and Resurrection of God, as Jesus? God.**

When fallen humanity attempted to extinguish God at the Cross, He turned the tables on them and rose from a temporally inflicted death to eternal life. Temporal death does not kill God and temporal death will not kill a Believer.

**Romans 8:35-39**

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

 A few weeks ago, I suggested that you go home and read Psalm 22. The Psalm gives the prophetic account of a man bring crucified and the fallen world around him thought they could control his death. But no… God is not far.

 **Psalm 22:1** For the choir director; upon Aijeleth Hashshahar.

A Psalm of David. My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?

Psalm 22 states that God was/is in control. The Cross was the redemptive plan of God from the foundation of the world. The Resurrection is the one historical event that fallen man could not stop its witness and power then or now. The Resurrection witness could have been easily prevented by the Jews and the Romans. Who could not produce a body from a Roman guarded tomb? The Jews and Romans. Why? Because they were not in control, God was. Christianity could have easily been stopped by the Romans and Jews producing the body of Jesus. But they could not.

 Psalm 22 is a victory song to which Jesus points from the Cross. Reading the Psalm does not leave any doubt that God is not far in times of trouble. The Psalm prophetically describes a man being crucified – which is Jesus. This also highlights the world’s fallen condition and the persecution of Believers. We will have hard times and many Believers will be persecuted and suffer. However, not only Jesus but all Believers will be delivered from this fallen world upon our passing. We will all be resurrected to a new eternal state and live victoriously with God in His heaven forever.

**John 14:2-3** - In my father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. **AMEN**