**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**The God Power in You**

 **Ephesians 4:1-10**

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

 Before we get into the Biblical text, I want to say that today’s message is for the whole world. You might think this is a given. I mean - is it not understood that every preacher is preaching to the whole world. I mean, a preacher’s sermon today, is, for the most part, available to the world-wide-web. In addition, the content and context of today’s Scripture is a photo of how God works in the life of Believers. This is what makes the difference in the Believer’s life, in contrast to the life of non-believers.

 God does not want us to live a life of fear, unforgiveness, hate and rejection. Many of us remember the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) at his inaugural address of 1933, with the country in the beginning years of the Great Depression – “*we have nothing to fear but fear itself*”. Satan wants us to fear. However, there is no fear in the love of God

 **1 John 4:8, 18**  God is love and . . . 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

 With this in heart and mind, let us read today’s biblical text. We start with a review of Paul’s previous words.

**Ephesians 3:20-21**

 20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

 These are the words Paul writes as he leads his audience into the next teaching. There are two elements to the Christian life Paul brings to the forefront.

**1.** God/Christ has power beyond our human understanding or capabilities.

**2.** God/Christ is willing to impower Believers to function at a higher level, than a fallen person, in this fallen world.

So, Christ is able to perform “in us” (Believers) more than we can think or ask of Him. So, there is the reality of the power of Christ at work in the life of the Believer. And whatever that power delivers is. . . is more abundant than we think.

 This is important for us to see. We Believers know that we live in a fallen world operating all around us 24/7. It behooves us to observe Paul’s confession in Romans 7, that he loses to the power of sin and death. But then, Paul also says that there is a greater power in the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1,2) that has Believers free from the law of sin and death. Paul goes on to specify - in that. . . if the Spirit of Christ is not in a person, then that person does not belong to Christ (Romans 8:9). In another words – Believers are “Spirit -filled” by definition. There is not any other kind of a Believer than a Spirit-filled Believer.

 This is defining in the life of a “redeemed” person living in the midst of the fallen world. From Paul’s experience, he witnesses that God’s Spirit gave life to him at his conversion. Obviously, Paul presents through his own epiphany (Damascus Road) that God gives life to a mortal body (Romans 8:11) who has surrendered to Him. This is accomplished by a person acquiescing to God’s Spirit coming to dwell in their heart. This empowers a person with the spiritual ability to live according to the Spirit of God operating inside their heart and no longer be in pursuit of the *desires of the flesh*. Paul equates a person who lives in the flesh to be under a *spirit of slavery* and *fear* (Romans 8:15). But the Believer? We have received the spirit of *adoption* as children of God, who we can call “Abba Father” - an enduring personal name identifying the closeness of the Believer to God.

So, the Spirit of God leads the Children of God (Romans 8:14) with the indwelling presence of His Spirit. This is what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3 – that a person had to be reborn of spirit in order for God to do the work through him. Remember, Nicodemus came to Jesus at night and wanted to know how He could do the things He did.

**John 3:1** Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;

 2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him**, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."**

 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one **is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

 6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

 Now that we have the transition understanding going into the next few verses, we can move forward in a correct context.

**Ephesians 4**

**1** Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord,

implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling

with which you have been called,

**2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

 **3** being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit

in the bond of peace.

In the first three verses, it is clear that Paul describes himself as he has served the Lord. Remember, Paul is the apostle who is writing to his friends in Ephesus who he had spent three years prior to his arrest and present incarceration in Rome, under house arrest awaiting trial before Caesar. Paul had asserted his Roman citizenship rights to appeal his case to Caesar. By this time, in serving the Lord, Paul had been beaten and left for dead by Greek and Jewish mobs who received the Gospel Message as an afront to their beliefs. So, when Paul says he is a “prisoner” of the Lord, he is testifying to his real imprisonment. Within his “prisoner status”, Paul is walking in a manner worthy of his calling. To live and survive in the life God had called him, Paul had received spiritual gifts from God. Paul lived the life Christ had called him and has called you and me.

**What do we learn from Paul’s life and words?**

That God calls us to a life that will be in contrast and, often times, in conflict with the fallen world, but He will equip us to manage our lives successfully. God does this by empowering us with His spiritual gifts.

In Ephesians 4:2, Paul identifies “humility” first before he identifies additional attributes God has provided for the Believer to access daily. Humility is the first *Beatitude* to be taught in Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount”.

**3** "Blessed are the poor in spirit (*humility*), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3)

Paul then identifies in verse 2 and 3 many of the same Godly attributes he listed in Galatians 5, identified as fruits of the Spirit.

**Galatians 5:22,23,25** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. . . . 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

In Galatians and Ephesians, Paul calls for unity in one Spirit, which is the Spirit of God.

**Ephesians 4:4** There is one body and one Spirit,

just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

 **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

 **6** one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

 **7** But to each one of us grace was given

according to the measure of Christ's gift.

In verse 7, Paul points to Christ as the conduit delivery of God’s grace. This is obviously directed at the Cross which opened the door to grace for every person who humbles themselves to God. Therefore, Paul can say that grace was given to every Believer. Believers receive God’s grace because they have humbled themselves to Him. In this context, grace is the unmerited favor of the Cross. Paul then goes on to paint a panoramic chronology of God’s triumphant mission over those who have freely chosen to surrender to the law of sin and death. Paul points to the incarnation, referred to here as Christ descended from heaven. Then Christ ascended to heaven, after the Resurrection, taking with Him those who had accepted His meritorious sacrifice on the Cross.

 **8** Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."

**Psalm 68:18** You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men, Even among the rebellious also, that the LORD God may dwell there.

 This is a Psalm of David relating to his victory over the Jebusites in Jerusalem over 900 years before the birth of Jesus. David liberated the captives in that city and led them to freedom. In comparison, God’s incarnation as Jesus the Messiah went to the Cross to pay the price for everyone’s sin – then rose from the grave/tomb demonstrating His mastery over Satan. Then Christ led those who chose to follow Him away from Satan’s prison of sin and death.

 This is the same declaration Jesus made in the beginning of His ministry years chronicled by Luke. After Jesus’ forty days in the wilderness and rejecting Satan’s offers to rule the world if He would only worship him - Jesus walks into a synagogue in Nazareth, stood-up when it was His time, and said. . .

**Luke 4:18** "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,

Paul further describes Jesus’ victory activities in spreading the Gospel in verses 9 and 10.

 **9** (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?

 **10** He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

 Paul is declaring that God incarnated Himself as Jesus, who is the Messiah/Christ, who, from a human perspective, came down from heaven to the earth (descended). With this descending, Jesus proclaims the Gospel to the ends of the earth and visited the spirits now in prison who where disobedient in the days of Noah. With this description, we see that God releases those captives, who want to be set free, and, at the same time, declares His victory over the rebellious spirits.

**1 Peter. 3:18-20**

18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; 19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

**Colossians. 2:13-15**

13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

**What do we learn from these verses?**

 That God has willfully accomplished, through His great love, a path for every person to choose and gain access to a victorious life through confession and repentance for the forgiveness of sin. Thus, becoming empowered by God’s indwelling Holy Spirit leading a person to a victorious life - transitioning them to live an eternal life with Him in His heaven. This path was only made possible by God’s grace demonstrated in the Cross of Christ.

**The Children Should Know**

 In our After School Program “Standout”, we teach these Godly character traits (life principles) on a daily basis. We do not present them all at once. We are deliberate in teaching children how to be a person as God intended. As I inform the children of God’s intent for their lives, I often think about the parents, coworkers, and community leaders they will become one day. I think about the challenges they will face. I think about how now is the best opportunity to equip them with the best possible plan for their lives. We tell them about Jesus’s words in the “Sermon on the Mountain”. We tell them it all starts with humility towards God their Creator. We let them know many things from the Word of God. We inform them that they are created in the image of God for good and not evil. That God is love and there is no fear in the love of God. **AMEN**