**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**God’s Grace Understood**

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

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*For God so loved the world He gave his only begotten son* . . . and we all know the meaning of the second half of John 3:16. Or do we? Some people live life with no adherence to the rest of the verse.

So, that is it . . . God took care of our sin-debt by His sacrifice on the Cross (John 3:16), and we are free to do whatever we want? That’s a very shortsighted and misleading context of God’s Word. What about a view to the context of the whole Bible and not reading just half of John 3: 16? Consider. .

**1 John 1:5-6**

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

In God’s reality, He calls us to have a heart-felt surrender to Him and invite His Spirit to operate in our hearts and minds. The remainder of John 3:16 says . . . *that whoever* ***believes*** *in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

The Greek word πιστεύω (pisteuo = believe) is in the form of an *active verb*. God does not call for us to agree with Him but to surrender our lives and actively live by His will and plan for our lives. James 2:19 says that the demons agree with God. *You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder*. They shudder for fear of God’s judgement . . . because they rebel against God and exist by their own rules. The demons did not surrender to God. Jesus also says . . .

. . . "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does **not obey** the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36)

Under God’s gift of love comes a required response to His love offer. God requires a surrendering response from us to allow his Holy Spirit to indwell our hearts and minds. God calls for us to leave our former manner of life. This happens with God’s assistance for His Holy Spirit is at work in the Believer’s life. Paul writes to the Believers in Ephesus.

**Ephesians 5:1** Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;

 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. 3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;

 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.

It is God’s Holy Spirit that convicts (John 16:8) us of our sin. God’s Holy Spirit leads us in our daily lives to live the life He has planned for us. Believers repent (turning from) . . . leaving behind our former manner of life. We all have an eternal need to surrender our will to His. The Apostle Paul writes to the Believers in Galicia . . .

**Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

**Therefore, God’s love and grace does not give us a license to do whatever we want. The Believers life-goal is to fulfill the life of Christ in them. God has plans for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:10).**

God’s grace under the guidance of His Holy Spirit works in the life of the Believer to walk away from sin and the former practices of life. However, some say that God’s grace saves all people regardless of what they actually do or say as long as they believe in Him.

**Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?**

**Jude 1:4** **For certain persons have crept in unnoticed**, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons **who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness** and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

**We have already demonstrated that the word *believe* is the faith of God at work in the heart of a person to transform that person to a newness in life, leaving their own life behind.**

In addition, some say that there is not a Hell. Some say that we die and our bodies decay into the ground and there is not an after-life. However, our own human experience tells us that there is another life after this one. A teaching for another time. Focusing on the topic at hand . . . Paul writes to the Believers in Rome. Continuing from Romans 6:1.

**Romans 6:1** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? . . . Continue in verse 14 . . . For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

**What Did Jesus Say?**

We are not under the Law concerning salvation. But the Law served as a tutor of our need for a Savior (Galatians 3:24). We need to examine the words of Jesus recorded in the New Testament. Remember that Jesus was a Jew who had perfect knowledge of the Old Testament. Jesus often quoted Old Testament Scripture to prove His legitimacy and authority to the Jews and their religious leaders. So, when Jesus said . . .

**Matthew 5:17-20** 17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

 20 "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

 . . **. Jesus upheld the Law code of God. The Law included moral codes of conduct.** Within the Law, (Tora) was the moral code the Jews were to keep in strict adherence. Included in the Law are moral codes of moral conduct in personal relationships that Jesus upheld with His statement . . . “*I did not come to abolish but to fulfill”.*

Murder (Exodus 21:12-14; Leviticus 24:17,21)

Striking or cursing a parent (Exodus 21:15,17)

Kidnapping (Exodus 21:16)

Failure to lock up a dangerous animal that results in someone’s death

 (Exodus 21:28-29)

Sorcery and Witchcraft (Exodus 22:18, Leviticus 20:27,

 Deuteronomy 13:5, 1 Samuel 28:9)

Bestiality (Exodus 22:19, Leviticus 20:16)

Working on the Sabbath (Exodus 31:14, 35:2, Numbers 15:32-36)

Incest (Leviticus 18:6-18, 20:11-12,14,17,19-21)

Human sacrifice (Leviticus 20:2-5)

Adultery (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22)

Homosexual acts (Leviticus 20:13)

Blasphemy (Leviticus 24:14,16, 23)

False prophecy (Deuteronomy 18:20)

Refusal to obey a decision of a judge or priest (Deuteronomy 17:12)

Perjury in capital cases (Deuteronomy 19:16-19)

A woman falsely claiming to be a virgin before marriage (Deuteronomy 22:13-21)

Sexual relations between a woman pledged to be married and a man other

 than her husband to be (Deuteronomy 22:23-24)

 Rebellion against parents (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)

**So, what does Jesus say about those who love Him and those that do not?**

Jesus addresses that faith/belief are active and not static or just an agreement statement in John 3:16, 36. Remember, “faith/belief” is an *active* verb. This means that Believers *actively* *pursue* and *live the moral life* Jesus calls them to live. **Scripture is clear. . . if a person loves Jesus . . . they will follow the His commands.**

Here are additional words of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John.

**John 14:15-24**

15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

 16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

 18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

 19 "After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.

 20 "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

 21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?"

 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

 24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

**John 15:8-12**

 8 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

 9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

 10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

 11 "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

 12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

**These moral commands included including protecting children.**

 **Matthew 18:6-7**

 6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

 7 "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! (See also Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2)

 From these passages of Scripture, we see that a person who makes the claim of loving Jesus and lives a life contrary to the moral code of the Bible that Jesus came to fulfill, and not abolish, is living a falsehood.

**1 John 1:5-6**

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

In Jesus’ Great Commission, He tells Believers to teach His commands to others.

**Matthew 28:20** teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

**Did The Reformers (1500’s AD) who translated the Bible translate these passages of Scripture to their native tongue?** Yes

Did Martin Luther of the Reformation translate the book of Romans into the German language? Yes, he did. Here is Romans 1:27 for those who can read German.

L45 Romans 1:27 Desselbigen gleichen auch die Man haben verlassen den naturlichen brauch des Weibes, vnd sind an einander erhitzet in jren Lüsten, vnd haben Man mit Man schande gewircket, vnd den Lohn jres jrthumbs (wie es denn sein solte) an jnen selbs empfangen.

English NAS 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

 **Paul on Judging Personal Behavior of Other Christians**

Many people will quote Jesus’ words in His Sermon on the Mount, recorded in the Gospel of Matthew . . . "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. (Matthew 7:1).

People quote this verse to refute people that are judging them for their bad amoral behavior. However, they only quote the first part of the verse and no additional verses. The truth is. . . that this verse is in the context of Jesus telling the Jews that if they judge people by the Law then that is how they will be judged. . . by the Law! But what does the next verse say?

2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

Jesus knew that at some point in their lives they had broken the Law/Tora and, therefore, were guilty of sin. So, pretending to keep the Law as a means of salvation would not work for the Jews. They must be saved by “faith” (Ephesians 2:8).

 In addition, Paul makes it clear that it is a duty and responsibility for the Believer to judge the **amoral** behavior of those in the Church. Paul writes under the direction of God’s Holy Spirit to the Believers in Corinth.

**1 Corinthians 5:9-13**

9 I wrote you in my letter **not to associate** with immoral people;

10 I did not at all mean with the **immoral people** of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.

11 But actually, I wrote to you **not to associate with any so-called brother** if he is an **immoral person,** or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one.

12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church**?**

13 But those who are outside, **God judges**. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

 **Paul, the Pharisee Jew, turned Christian,** knew the Law extremely well. He understood the teachings of Jesus. Paul knew the Law pointed to our need for a Savior, in that eventually all would break the Law. Paul calls the Law a “Tutor” (Galatians 3:24) that leads us to Christ, so we can see that our justification to God can only be through faith. Our faith surrenders to God’s Holy Spirit indwelling us and guiding our lives to follow His commands . . . thus, living moral lives. This is why Paul says in Galatians 2:20 *it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.* And in Romans 8:*9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*

Paul, guided by God’s Holy Spirit, is very explicit in writing to his friends and fellow Believers about their own personal moral conduct and with whom they associate. We close this sermon reading God’s Word that speaks for itself.

**Ephesians 4:14-20**

14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

 17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

 19 and they, having become callous, **have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.**

 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way,

 **Ephesians 5:6-16**

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

 **7 Therefore do not be partakers with them;**

 8 for you were formerly darkness, **but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light**

 9 (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

 **11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;**

 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.

 13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.

 14 For this reason it says, "**Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."**

 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,

 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

I encourage all to read Jude and Romans 1:18-32 (end of chapter). **AMEN**

**Romans 1:18-32**

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.

 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

 26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

 28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips,

 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

**Jude**

1:1 Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ:

 2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

 **4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.**

 5 Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.

 6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,

 **7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.**

 **8 Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties.**

 9 But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

 10 But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.

 11 Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

 12 These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted;

 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

 14 It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones,

 15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

 16 These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

 **17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

 **18 that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts."**

 **19 These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.**

 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

 22 And have mercy on some, who are doubting;

 23 save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

 24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

 25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever.

**AMEN**