**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

***Qualified***

**Colossians 1:12 - 14**

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

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Key Passage in Colossians – verse 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

 Colossians 1:12 proclaims “giving thanks to the Father”. This is in reflective context to the aforementioned spiritual gifts and qualities (knowledge, wisdom, understanding, steadfastness, patience, joy) assigned to Believers that originate with God the Father. “Giving thanks to the Father” also projects to Paul’s following words. Let us read them.

**Colossians 1**

12 giving thanks to the Father,

 who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness,

and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Verses 12-14 proclaim and provide great detail of how God works to bring the *opportunity* for salvation to all people. In Paul’s letters, he shares the basic Gospel Message. Paul writes to the Colossians making sure or reiterating the facts of the Gospel. He is fully aware that his letters will be read many times and passed to others. Today, most Christians are aware of what Paul is saying but may be hard-pressed to find the biblical text to support what they believe. These words identify the fallen world in which we live and God’s solution:

1. People need to be qualified by God to receive the inheritance of eternal life.
2. Believers are referred to as “saints” distinguishing them from those outside the Light.
3. There is a domain of darkness from which people need to be rescued and brought into the Light.
4. Fallen lives need to be transferred into the kingdom of the Son.
5. Redemption and forgiveness come through the Son.

 All of these elements represent a biblical worldview that God created, and He asked us to participate with Him. Let us look at the first element.

1. **Qualified: How does God qualify? Is there a qualification list in the Bible? Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5)**

From reading the first few chapters in Genesis, we see that God laid the groundwork for salvation. This was needed in a world created with “free will choice.” In short, since before the Fall of mankind, God offers all people the opportunity to humble themselves to Him. Qualification to receive the inheritance for eternal life with God starts with humility. Humility towards God opens the door to all the rest of the blessings in life He has made available to people.

God asked Adam to humble himself to His plan for life (Genesis 2:17). However, Adam and Eve chose for their “pride” to rule their lives (Genesis 3). Pride is the opposite of humility.

In the New Testament, after Jesus is tested in the wilderness by Satan (Matthew 4) and choosing His disciples, we see that God in the flesh, as Jesus Christ, the Messiah, had His first major address in what is called the Sermon on the Mount. Being the one of first, if not the first major address, Messianic sermons, we can assume that Jesus stated the most qualifying attribute a person is to possess to enter the kingdom of heaven. He chose of the most importance for a person to be “poor in spirit” (humility to God) as the first Beatitude (Matthew 5:3). All the other beatitudes follow behind humility.

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

 **Humility toward God – Cain and Abel (Genesis 4)**

 Scripture is clear and purposely makes the point that Abel brought his “firstling” as an offering to God. Thus, demonstrating Abel’s humility toward God. Cain begrudgingly “in the course of time” brought an offering (Genesis 4:2-5) of which God did not have any regard. Cain became angry and his countenance fell. God told Cain that sin was crouching at the door and its desire for him, but Cain was to “master it". However, Cain was not able to master the sin inside of him and rose against his brother and killed him.

How could this have been avoided? By Cain humbling himself to God’s plan for his life. Instead of Cain humbling himself to God and becoming spiritually equipped to master sin. . . Cain allowed sin to be a master over him. Cain did not want to humble himself to God. We see this in the offering that was “begrudgingly” offered to God “in the course of time”. The biblical text makes the distinction between Abel’s “firstling” brought as an offering and Cain’s “in the course of time” or “at the end of days”. Here is the most literal English translation.

**Young’s Literal Translation** (YLT 1862 A.D.)

**Genesis 4:3-4 3** And it cometh to pass at the end of days that Cain bringeth from the fruit of the ground a present to Jehovah; **4** and Abel, he hath brought, he also, from the female firstlings of his flock, even from their fat ones;

We see other Old Testament people like Enoch who humbled his life to God and God took him. Noah and Abraham responded affirmatively to God’s call and from their hearts lived righteous lives as God called them. It is noted that within their lives that were considered to be righteous they still made mistakes (sin). However, the total account of their lives proved that they practiced humility toward God.

**Sovereignty of God**

There is a theological term (Sovereignty of God) used to describe that all things originate from God the Creator. And God has the sovereign authority to manage His creation. This means, as we have seen throughout the Bible, God has intervened and also has chosen to let things run their course in this fallen world.

 For example: God explained to Adam what would happen if he chose to eat from the forbidden tree. Adam and Eve did, and God allowed the consequences of their decision to go forth. God comes to Noah and gives him an opportunity to respond to His judgement. Noah responded and faithfully built the Ark. Here are some passages of Scripture detailing God’s sovereignty.

**Revelation 21:6** Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

**Romans 11:33-36** Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

 34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? 35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?

 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

**Jeremiah 27:5** "I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight.

**Psalm 103:19 - 22** 19 The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.

 20 Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, Obeying the voice of His word!

 21 Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You who serve Him, doing His will.

 22 Bless the LORD, all you works of His, In all places of His dominion; Bless the LORD, O my soul!

Within God’s *sovereignty*, He *qualifies* all people to share in the *inheritance* where all Believers are included.

Verses 12 highlights the fact that people have to be *qualified* by God to share in the inheritance of eternal life with God. There is not any *universal* salvation regardless of what a person believes. Being qualified is not predestined. Predestination is a violation of God’s free will choice that He gave Adam in Genesis 2:17. (See also: Romans 10:13; Joel 2:32.) If God declares that anyone can call on His name to be saved but then has a predetermined list. . . then what’s the point? God’s foreknowledge is sovereign to Him. Romans 8:29 clearly states, “*For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son”.*

Yes, God’s foreknowledge extends back to the foundation of the world. He knew then whose names would not be in the book of life (Revelation 17:8). It frustrates many people that God knows who will surrender to Him and who will not.

We can say that God does **vet** people’s faith. God examines their heart, and, if they are true, God *elects* them to His Kingdom. Ezekiel 36 is a beautiful statement of how God will change a person’s heart and give them a new spirit. **The key**. . . is for a person to ask God to change their heart as He asked people do to in Ezekiel 36:37. People can do a lot of meritorious religious stuff, but did they ever really humble themselves to God and ask Him to give them a new heart and spirit?

Once a person becomes a Believer (vetted by God then elected), they live a life in the process of sanctification. That is constantly maturing and conforming to the image of Christ. Remember that God does not want to lose one person (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4). God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked, but He wants them to turn from their wicked ways and live (Ezekiel 18:23). This is seen in the very beginning with Adam, when God gave him a choice for life (Genesis 2:17).

John 3:16 is God’s qualifying verse with the words, *“For God so loved the word, that He (God) gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”.* God qualifies the sincerity of a person’s heart then approves them as Believers.

John 6:63 (below) begins a *spiritual* teaching from Jesus that many people walked away. This is when Jesus tells those that had been following Him, and the disciples, that “*he who eats My flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”.*

63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

 64 "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning (foreknowledge – Romans 8:28) who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.

 65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

 66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

 This is a qualifying statement of faith God the Father directed Jesus to say. John 6:64 highlights God’s foreknowledge (Romans 8:29) spoken through Jesus. Jesus said, in John 8:28 , “. . . *and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.”.*

**Jesus says that all that the Father gives Him will come to Him and He will not cast out.**

**John 6:35-39**

35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and

he who believes in Me will never thirst.

36 "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.

37 "**All that the Father gives Me will come to Me**, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. (At the Great White Throne Judgement – Revelation 20)

**(See Also - John 10:29; 17:2, 6, 9, 24)**

**Revelation 20:11-14** tell us of Jesus’ raising on the “last day.” The words “last day” point to a time of judgment. The final judgement is described in Revelation 20. This makes the prophetic statement from Jesus true in John 14:6. . . *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through* ***Me****.*

**Revelation 20:11** Then I saw a great white throne and Him (Jesus Christ) who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

 **12** And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

 **13** And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

 **14** Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

 **15** And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

 **2.** **Saints:** Believers are referred to as “saints” in the Light. The NAS capitalizes the Greek word φωτί -photi-Light because there is the definite article τῷ (the) in front of the word in the Greek text. This is important because the saints (believers) are in a place, an existence, a state of being that is present now, not later. The Light is separate from the alternative of light, that is darkness. God’s kingdom is present now living in the hearts of the saints. Jesus is synonymous with the Light.

 **2 Corinthians 4:6** For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

**John 1:9** There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

1. **Rescued From the Dominion of Darkness (verse 13)**

Verse 13 states that people have to be “rescued” from the domain of darkness. This means that our world has two spiritual forces. One is Light and the other is darkness. Verse 13 also makes it clear that people have to be transferred to God’s kingdom described as belonging to His Son.

**John 3:19-21** 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 8:12** Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

**John 12:35** So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. 36 "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

1. **Fallen Lives Need to be Transferred to God’s Kingdom**

Romans 3:10-28 summarizes the fallen condition of all people.
“*There is none righteous*.” (See also Psalm 53:1, 14:1.) These passages from God’s Word accurately detail the fallen condition of all mankind from Adam. Who in their right mind could witness the events in our lifetime and not realize that humanity needs to be saved from itself and transferred to God’s kingdom? Humanity is bankrupt for solutions to bring about peace with themselves or God.

**Ecclesiastes 7:20** Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.

**Job 14:4** "Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one!

**Job 15:14** "What is man, that he should be pure, Or he who is

 born of a woman, that he should be righteous?

**Job 15:16** How much less one who is detestable and corrupt,

 Man, who drinks iniquity like water!

**5. Redemption & Forgiveness**

Then in verse 14 redemption and forgiveness are tied directly to the Son. This is obviously a connection to faith in Jesus’ work at the Cross. Here are a few of many Scripture citations tying the Son/Christ/Jesus to confession, forgiveness and redemption.

**1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (ESV)

**Titus 2:14** Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. (ESV)

**1 Peter 2:24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (ESV)

**1 Timothy 2:6** Who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. (ESV)

**Romans 5:8** But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (ESV)

**John 3:16** “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (ESV)

It is His work on the Cross in the act of substitutionary atonement that “finished” the propitiation for sin (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2, 4:10). During the Resurrection, nor at any time, Jesus did not say to the Disciples that His work on the Cross was insufficient and He left something for us to do. To the contrary, Jesus said He came and had fulfilled/accomplished Scripture (John 4:34, 17:4, 19:28).

So, when does a person access Jesus Christ’s work on the Cross? Again, verse 14 identifies the Son as the conduit through which redemption and forgiveness comes. This takes place when a person surrenders to God in humble heart-broken faith which enables them to confess their sin. We see this in Acts 2:36-38 when the Jews are convicted by the Holy Spirit preaching of Peter. . . they were *pierced to the heart* and called-out to Peter, “*Brethren, what shall we do*?”

This event, chronicled in Acts 2, harkens back to Deuteronomy 30:6-8 as part of the Torah. . . the first five books of the Old Testament.

6 "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. 7 "The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. 8 "And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today.

These words are critical in understanding God’s qualification to life and eternal life (salvation). This text demonstrates that God’s plan for salvation had not changed. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and the rest humbled their hearts to God through “faith” and gained approval (Hebrews 11) as righteous. The only way to gain right-standing with God is for your heart to be circumcised (pierced, Acts 2:37) by Him, through a spiritual humbling experience. All of us who have had life-saving surgery had to consent to the surgeon to cut us open. We could not operate (cut) on ourselves. We had to humble ourselves to the doctor’s authority to save our lives.

Once we allow God to circumcise our hearts. . . then a person has the ability and desire to observe (repent) and follow God’s commandments. Jesus said that His commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3). And those that love Him follow His commands (John 14:15).

So, back to Peter preaching in the name of Jesus to the Jews after Pentecost. . .

**Acts 2:36-38** 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified."

37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

At that point, the Jews did not have any response to Peter’s Holy Spirit preaching. This is at the point they had to make a choice. . . like all of us. A person can bow-up and become stiff-neck-prideful and start making excuses and seek to place the blame on someone else or humble themselves to God. These Jews were at that point they were spiritually bankrupt to respond to Peter’s preaching particularly when Peter said, “*This Jesus whom you crucified”*. They did not know what to do. But God has the solution. Now that they acknowledged they were spiritually bankrupt and guilty of their sin in participating in the crucifixion of Jesus, they could have ears to hear and eyes to see (Jeremiah 5:21, Ezekiel 12:2, Matthew 13:15, Acts 28:27,). Peter tells them to repent. These Jews would not have been able to repent (turn their heart) unless they had first humbled themselves to God. This is why Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount the first Beatitude was to be *poor in spirit* (humility to God). After these Jews repented, they were then eligible to witness their repentance in water baptism. Remember that water baptism did not save them. Their salvation came when they humbly surrendered to God’s Holy Spirit speaking to them (John 16:8). Water baptism was only a public statement of their faith “OVER” the name of Jesus.

 καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν **ἐπὶ** τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ εἰς

and Baptize each you **over** the name Jesus Christ into

ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, (Acts 2:38 Greek Text)

release sins

The context here points to Jesus Christ as the one through whom the “release of sins” come. . . not the physical act of water baptism. Anyone who says that the physical act of water baptism saves a person is not reading scripture in context. Ephesians 2:5-9 specifically states that not by any works can a person be saved. (See also: 2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 3:23-31; Hebrews 11.)

Remember that at the Great White Throne judgement. . . Jesus Christ is the judge who oversees the opening of the books of deeds and the book of life.

**Revelation 20:12** And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

Water baptism is a deed. If a person banks their salvation on a deed. . . then according to Jesus at the Great White Throne judgement. . .their names are found in the books of Deeds, and they are placed in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15). Our society does not like to hear biblical ultimatums. And the complaint. . . “How could a loving/just God send anyone to hell?” The truth is. . . and we have taught previously, God does not send anyone to hell. The reality is. . . that anyone who wants to be with God surrenders their heart to Him and follows His plan for their life. If a person does not want to be with God, they do not have to be with Him. God’s love and grace gives them free will.

**John 19:30** Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

 **AMEN**