**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

***Sin Really Killed Me? You’re Kidding?***

 **Colossians 1: 21**

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

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We start today in Colossians 1:21.

**Colossians 1**

21 And although you were formerly alienated

and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds,

Considering this verse, we will explore its meaning and implications for our lives.

In the 20st century, 231 million people died in wars and conflicts “*by human decision”.*

Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century, 3rd ed

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**Without God. . . Sin is the Master over Human Decisions**

We can see thatmore people died by *human decision* in the 20th century than all previous centuries combined. *Human decisions* that were alienated and hostile in mind, and engaged in evil deeds, to end someone’s life. Killing in the 20th century was obviously epidemic and catastrophic.

In all of these conflicts, someone made a choice, like Cain did, that their life-plan agenda took precedent over another person. And, like Cain, they could not control their emotions because sin was master over them. The end result in the 20th century was the killing of millions of people. We can say that sin leads to death, and from the reported facts from the 20th century is that. . . sin kills.

Sins are the acts and/or thoughts opposing God’s code and plan for life. We are in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:12). Plucking a grape and eating it while in the grocery store without paying for it obviously does not cause the death of a person. However, it needs to be understood that Satan’s desire and goal is to have sin eventually engulf a person in order to lead to death. Spiritual death is Satan’s first goal, then physical death (1 Peter 5:8). Adam and Eve died spiritually first. Satan’s desire is to take your life (John 8:44). For those who do not surrender to God in this life. . . Satan’s “separation from God’s plan” continues after this temporal life resulting in the eternal separation from God. . . this is eternal death. In contrast to Satan’s goal, God has an eternal life-plan for all of us to be with Him in His heaven for eternity. God does not make anyone surrender to His eternal life-plan. Anyone can choose not to be with God in His heaven for eternity. God does not send anyone to hell. People reject God and choose to be separated from Him for an eternity.

**Why do I need to make these points?**

**Sons of Disobedience (See Ephesians 2:2-3) – The Atheist/Agnostic**

Because there are those *agnostic* and *atheistic* *human secularists* who are, and have been, hard at work trying to rewrite the origins of life that erases God and His Word and eternal plan for our lives from the world. To them, there is not such a thing as *evil, sin or an eternal spiritual life.* We need to tell our children. . . our teenagers. . . that Atheists teach that there is not any overriding objective morality established by God to manage human life. They teach that morality and life-choices are subjective to the individual and/or are produced by biological driven mechanisms in pursuit of survival. Note that there is not any free-will-choice available in a biological driven decision-making process. If life-choices are driven by biological urgers to survive then there is not anything personal for us to attach ourselves, like another person. Other people are just biological blobs of which your biology interacts. Within this biological survival worldview. . . *survival of the fittest* comes to dominate culture and governments. The God-given definitions of what is morally right and wrong, good or evil, sinful or righteous are not needed, sought after or wanted. Therefore, with the *survival of the fittest* goal. . . people can carry-out their actions and statements upon others because they have the will and power to do so. People can impose their will upon others as a biological procedural process of *survival of the fittest*.

**How Did This Work in the 20 Century?**

 **Isaiah 14:12 "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!”**

We see this carried-out with Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party who murdered millions of people when they had the power to carry-out their beliefs. Stalin, in the U.S.S.R. (Russia), did the same. History is replete with these tyrants. Again, there were more people murdered by atheists and agnostics tyrants who believed in Darwinian Evolution’s *survival of the fittest* in the 20th century than all the previous centuries.

One of the major contributors was the mechanization of war and the use of chemical weapons (WWI). These technological advancements in making more efficient killing machines, in the hands of the tyrants of war, made the taking of life easier and quicker than ever before in human history.

The Nazi party under the leadership of Adolf Hitler pursued Darwin’s teaching of *survival of the fittest*. They believed that since they were the stronger country and race, they could impose their national will upon others. This not only fulfilled Darwin’s teaching taunting the *survival of the fittest*. . . it also fulfilled the teachings of their own German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) who was a promoter of the Age of Enlightenment (1685 A.D. – 1815 A.D.). Nietzsche is the man that said and published “God is dead”. With this statement, atheistic governments did not have moral responsibility or duty to anyone. Here is an excerpt from Nietzsche.

“**God is dead.** God remains dead. **And we have killed him**. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?”

Again, this statement was declared as a product of and in context of the Age of Enlightenment when European philosophers found that there was not any need of God to explain the creation and the origins or management of life. Eventually, in 1859, these Enlighteners and political leaders came to feast upon Darwin’s publications that gave an alternative scientific explanation for the origins and management of life. Darwin in his 1859 publication “On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life” provided to atheistic academia and political leaders their sought-after science to proclaim that there was not any need for the God of creation (God of the Bible) since life and the world in which we lived was not created but evolved from random undirected meaningless purposeless processes. Their worldview believed that they did not have a duty or responsibility to any higher authority because they believed that science and philosophy had proved God does not exist.

With this acceptance, Nietzsche made the observation that mankind has philosophized God out of their way. . . that modern Western humanity can live without the need, use or want of God. Why seek or turn to a God that does not exist? Many see that Nietzsche prophesied what would come in the 20th century. In fact, he was correct. We stated earlier that the 20th century produced more wars on a global scale and produced more deaths by human decision than in all of previous human history. There was no longer any responsibility, duty or need to love God (who did not exist) or your neighbor because morality was only subjective to the individual to fulfill their own selfish ambitions and way of life managed by biological mechanisms in pursuit of *survival of the* *fittest.* . . “might makes right”? No. No overriding objective right or wrong exists! Their “might” pursues making their lives survive at the expense of their neighbors. There is not any “love your neighbor” or “pray for your enemies”. (Mark 12:31; Matthew 5:43-44). In this fallen world, God waits for anyone to call upon Him (Romans 10:13).

**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 a Mess. Why Does God Allow Sin?**

We remind ourselves that God allowed sin to be the choice people make opposing His love. God’s love also gave the angels a choice. Satan also had a choice.

**Ezekiel 28:15-16 15** "You were blameless in your ways. From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. **16** "By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire.

God created the creation with a choice for love. Again, people are created in the image of God, and God is love (Genesis 1:26; 1 John 4:8). So, with this knowledge our number one goal in life is to pursue love which is described in 1 Corinthians 13. Love is not a programed response. God did not create people to be robots. Love is chosen through and over other choices. . . like hate, unforgiveness, pride and selfishness. God is love, and we are created in His image to have the opportunity to choose love and experience the life He has planned for us over alternative non-loving choices. We could never know what real love is if it were not chosen over other choices. Would we want to live life and not have the choice to experience love?

With this understanding stated. . . that God is love and we are created in His image to live a loving life. . . and at the same time. . . Satan offers sin all the time like he did to Adam, Eve and Cain in order to create a separation from God that leads to death. Satan’s goal, through the operation of sin, is the destruction of life that God created. Cain, on his own, could not master sin which led to the murder of his brother Abel. However, Abel lived to be with God eternally, made to be in right standing with God by his faith (Hebrews 11:1-4).

**Satan’s Attractive Sin**

We can see that Satan presents sin to be complimentary to life as in Satan’s “Test in the Wilderness” of God, as Jesus Christ, chronicled in Matthew 4. Satan quoted Scripture out-of-context and offered Jesus material things and a chance to rule the whole world if Jesus would worship him. But Jesus’ kingdom is not of this temporal world (John 18:36). Satan could not give what he did not possess. Jesus refuted Satan with Scripture and demonstrated that it’s possible for a person not to have sin be the master over them. Jesus being God in the Flesh, and the Holy Spirit had the power and authority to refute Satan. From this account, we have another reminder that Satan is the enemy of God, life and humanity whose aim is to destroy people. And that Satan’s offer of sin can be mastered with God’s Holy Spirit in operation in a temporal person.

Going back to the first murder in Genesis. . . God told Cain that sin (life’s enemy) was crouching at his door desiring him and he needed to master sin (Genesis 4:7). However, Cain did not have the spiritual power to master sin on his own because he refused to allow God’s Spirit to work in him which led to him murdering his brother Abel. We see a parallel to Cain’s inability to master sin in Paul’s teaching in Romans 7 where he confessed that he was powerless to avoid the operation of sin in his life.

**Romans 7**

In Colossians 1:21, Paul reminds his audience of their lost-no-hope past. Using words like *alienated, hostile in mind, and evil deeds* sums-up the life of a person separated from God.

**Colossians 1:** 21 And although you were formerly alienated

and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds,

Paul knows from his own life experiences that he was hostile in mind to God and engaged in evil deeds like hunting down Believers in Christ chronicled in Acts 9. Paul confesses in **Romans 7:7-8** that he did not know right from wrong if God had not awakened him to his life practices that were destructive to him and his neighbor.

7 I would not have come to know sin except through the Law;

for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said,

"YOU SHALL NOT COVET." (Exodus 20:17 – 10th Commandment)

8 But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.

 See further explanation Paul gives is Romans 5:20.

20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

The Law highlighted sin in contrast to living God’s plan for life. But what about before the Law was given to Moses (about 1400 B.C.). . . was God’s righteous living by faith guided by His Spirit known by people? Yes. How do we know?

God told Adam His plan for his life was not to eat from the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:17). From this, we can understand that Adam was not aware that there was a forbidden tree from which he should not eat that could harm him and alienate him from God. However, God made it known to Adam of the sin and death that awaited him if he ate from the forbidden tree. I see the forbidden tree’s fruit to represent rebellion in the form of *pride and selfishness.* . . “my way or the highway”. Here we see that God presented Adam, and all of us, an opportunity to exercise our free-will-choice with which He graciously created us. The forbidden tree’s fruit of *pride and selfishness* is always there for us to choose in contrast of our choice of love’s selflessness, peace and forgiveness.

 So, it was God that made Adam aware of the sin of eating the fruit from the forbidden tree. And it was God’s Law Code given to Moses that made people aware and highlighted action(s) God did not want the people to do. Once God’s will was violated, what happened?

**Genesis 3:7** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

In the Exodus, the Hebrews were not *patient* when Moses delayed; they did not allow God’s love to be at work in them. “Love is patient.” (1 Corinthians 13:4)

**Exodus 32:1** Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us;

**Explanation for Romans 7:7-8**

Many biblical scholars explain Romans 7:7-8 in the following way. When you tell a child not to do something. . . like do not touch the hot stove or don’t stick anything in the electrical wall socket . . . you almost can count on it. . . the first thing they do when you leave the room is touch the hot stove or stick an object in the electrical wall socket. Adults can respond the same way to an order not to do something. So, when the Mosaic Law tells people not to desire (covet) their neighbor’s stuff, they then are drawn to a greater propensity to do so. However, I considered another approach that identifies the total depravity of man.

**Sin is Dead to the Totally Depraved**

Sin is dead because when there is not any objective higher authority providing parameters to live life. . . then anything goes because there is not any reference to an overriding objective morality. Sin is dead (non-existent) in the void of God in the heart and mind of a person. Sin is dead because it is not perceived to be wrong or evil. This represents the totally depraved heart and mind of fallen humanity who does not have any spiritual awareness to know the difference between right and wrong. I like the 18th century biblical commentator John Gill’s phrasing *“that it is without the knowledge of the spirituality of it”* (Exposition of the Old & New Testaments; Vol 8 Page 470).

In Paul’s case prior to meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus, he was unaware, insensible and oblivious to God’s Spirit indwelling him that would have given him a greater power over the law of sin and death. Therefore, the law of sin and death directed him to the normative behavior within Judaism. The normative behavior was to obtain arrest warrants for members of the Way, hunt them down and arrest them to be brought back to Jerusalem for trial. Normative behavior was to heartily approve of stoning Stephen (Acts 8:1) and hold the robes of those that threw the murderous stones (Acts 7:5-8).

 Crime-infested neighborhoods often raise children to be criminals because they witness what they learn to be normative behavior in their parents, relatives and neighbors as they commit crimes. The odds are really good that these children will duplicate what they see. They adopt a normative criminal behavior because they do not know any other way. Their norm or morality is subjective to them and their culture. Sin is dead to them.

 This leads us back to Nietzsche (God is dead and we killed Him.) and why is Adolf Hitler an evil man? Without any God as the determiner of what is good and bad, Hitler can be called good. If fallen man is left to define their actions absent of a responsibility or duty to be moral according to God, then Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin can consider their actions to be good/right in their genocide policies. Well. . . not really.

Once again, in the pure atheistic mind. . . right or wrong does not exist! “Might makes their lives survive at the expense of their neighbors.” Their choices are simply a product of their biology pushing them to survive at the expense of their neighbor. And, who is to speak against them with a higher/overriding moral authority? No one. Because in their phycological profile a moral higher authority does not exist.

**Paul’s Awareness of Sin**

Paul admits that once he knew of the commandments of God, he became aware of the wrong he was doing. . . like persecuting members of the Way became wrong. He realized sin was a destructive anti-God lifeforce in his life. . . that created a separation from God (a dead state). Once Paul realized that sin was a live-force deceiving and controlling him, he realized he was not really alive but dead, that is separated from God.

**Romans 7**: 9 I was once alive apart from the Law; [So Paul thought] but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died;

The Law convinced Paul’s consciousness’ of sin, and he realized he was really dead (separated from God).

10 and this commandment, which was to result in life proved to result in death for me;

 [God’s morality judged him]

11 for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment deceived me and through it killed me. [Sin separated Paul from God. Separation from God is death.]

God told Adam that he would die if he ate from the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:17). Adam and Eve did not physically die; they spiritually died and created a separation from God when they sinned against Him. God then removed (separated) Adam and Eve from the Garden and Him (Genesis 3).

12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die;

but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

We see people who do not think their life is sinful and they fail to see the wrong. These, by their fallen nature, intentionally or by ignorance call good evil and evil good (Isaiah 5:20). For they do not have any power within themselves to set themselves free from their fallen condition. Theologians call this state of fallen humanity “total depravity”. I used these words earlier in the sermon. Yes, tell someone who is lost that they are “totally depraved”. I’m sure it will be a positive influence on their heart and mind. Well, maybe that is not a good idea. However, we. . . as people of the Book, with Holy Spirit led hearts and minds, should understand that lost people who are un-generated. . . that is un -reconciled to God. . . do not have the compacity to comprehend the Gospel Message and have God’s Spirit indwell them to master sin. When they do surrender to God, as those Jews humbly surrendered to the Holy Spirit message of Peter in Acts 2:36-38, they then. . . can call-out to God for help. . . *what must we do?* At that point, a person has given-up their sovereignty of mind and heart and are no longer hostile in mind to God’s plan and commands for their life.

**How does Paul describe sin and its power? As a Law!**

Paul witnesses that the law of sin that dwells in his flesh is waging war with the spiritual Law of God that operates in the inner man. . . that is in his mind. Sin is the aggressor. Paul realizes his fallen state and describes his condition to be a prisoner of the law of sin which is in operation in his flesh. Paul confesses that he cannot control the sin that is in operation within him that causes him to do the very things he hates. However, Paul wants to serve the law of God and provides the solution to all of us (Romans 8:1-2). **Romans. 7:14-25**

14 For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

15 For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

16 But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. [Paul’s fallen nature wants to sin, but he is conforming to the Law of God operating in his mind

 that he wants to do.]

17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

23 but I see a different law [law of sin] in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind [law of God] and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

24 Wretched man that I am!

Who will set me free from the body of this death?

25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

 From Paul’s words, we can see and have experienced already in life that all of us on our own, without God’s indwelling Spirit empowering us, are hopelessly in bondage to the law of sin and death. What is the answer? Paul gives the answer in Romans 8.

**Romans 8:1** Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh,

God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh

and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us,

who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

. . . 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.

**AMEN**