**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

 ***The Power of The Cross***

 ***Colossians 2:15***

 **October 23rd, In the Year of Our Lord 2022**

 **Pastor Matthew Diehl**

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

Read and/or print sermon notes from our website – roundtopchurch.org

**The Power of the Cross**

**15** When He had **disarmed the rulers and authorities,**

He made a **public display** of them,

having **triumphed** over them **through Him.**

This passage of Scripture is challenging to translate from the Greek language it was originally written. There are a number of commentaries discussing the possibilities of word order and meaning.

Without getting too technical. . . scholars give attention to the identity of which person of God (Trinity) is assigned a function. When we give assignments to who “He” is, this makes sense.

When God the Father disarmed the principal rulers, He (God) in bold confidence made a public display of them showing victory over them through Jesus Christ.

Biblical scholars point to the historical background of the words “public display” directing attention to a Roman General returning to Rome in a victory parade with captured enemy soldiers behind him being forced to march in humiliation as the crowd cheered their demoralizing defeat. Of course, the context of *rulers and authorities* are evil enemies of God. . . enemies of love, grace, forgiveness that bring peace between God and people and between people with their neighbor.

**So, how did God, as Jesus, “The” Christ, disarm the fallen authorities? This is the power of the Cross.**

To disarm someone, they must have been armed. With what was Satan armed (and those who have chosen to be under his sway)? And who armed them?

God gave the angels and all people the ability to choose to love Him and follow His truth and ways. We can say God armed all people with *free will choice*. To be clear, God did not create sin; God allows all to create their own sin. Example: the government allows (creates an environment) for a person to work or not. . . but they do not make a person choose a particular employment or what to do if they choose not to work.

With Satan’s *free will choice,* he chose to rebel against God. It is obvious that Satan’s goal is to lead people away from God. So, Satan, exercising *free will choice,* has the ability to test, tempt and lie to people. Notice that we all have this ability. We see this in the Garden of Eden when Satan, as the serpent, lied and put Eve to the test. . . of which we all know she failed and allowed herself to be taken-in. She allowed herself to be deceived. And yes, Adam was there with her and said and did nothing. Adam: The spiritual dead-beat husband.

What is Satan’s number one big lie? God does not want you to be like Him, knowing what He knows, but you can. The truth is that we will never be the God of creation who is love, grace, peace and truth without flaw. However, there is one thing that we did become like God. . . the knowledge of good and evil. God can manage this knowledge, but He did not create people with the intent to possess the knowledge of good and evil. Life is superior without the knowledge of good and evil. The Fall of Eve and Adam. . . with the possession of the knowledge of good and evil, highlights the fact that Humanity lost its innocence and became destructive. Eternal life here, in this present world, with God, became unattainable. God always had a Plan B.

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever "-- **Genesis 3:22**

**An additional note is in order here.**

From the beginning, God’s intended purpose was for people to live with Him in a sinless state. We can call this Plan A. Since God is love (1 John 4:8) and, by the very nature of love, it cannot be compelled but freely chosen. Due to the events chronicled in Genesis, we can see that God is unequivocal about His offering of love and free-will-choice.

Obviously, with God’s omniscience (All-knowing), He knew the “Fall” would take place. His overriding love and grace afforded a free-will-choice to be given to every person regardless of their knowledge. We see this in Genesis 2:17 when Adam was advised (and given a choice) not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This was Plan A.

 After the Fall, God’s overriding love and grace affords fallen man another opportunity (Plan B) to be with Him for an eternity with the sin and death environment excluded. Therefore, God’s love and grace ushered Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden before they ate from the Tree of Life and remained in their fallen state forever without any ~~o~~ opportunity to reverse their spiritually separated state from God. Like all of us after we sin~~ned~~ against God, Adam and Eve were given another opportunity to surrender to Him. We see this must have taken place. . . because in Genesis 4, Eve acknowledges God as the “Giver and Creator” of life by appointing her another son in the place of Abel.

25 Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, she said, "God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him." 26 To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD. **Genesis 4:25-26**

After the Fall, God’s plan was the Cross. We see this immediately in Genesis 3:15.

15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise (crush) you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

 The vast majority of Biblical scholars see this Genesis 3:15 pointing directly to the Incarnation (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23) and the Cross of Jesus Christ that afforded fallen man a path to avert the effects of the Fall. . . of sin and death. We can also see Satan being crushed by Jesus in the “Test in the Wilderness” (Matthew 4). Paul reveals Jesus’ “crushing mission” to be ongoing when he writes in Romans 16:20 that the God of peace will soon “crush” Satan under your feet, The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. And, in 1 John 3:8, we read. . . the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. And then there is Christ presiding over judgement in Revelation 20. All these passages of Scripture declare that through all the God acts in the Incarnation and beyond. . . that Satan was/is defeated.

**Now. . . continuing discussion from page 2, “the Lies of Satan”.**

In addition, the big lie is. . . that this temporal life is to be pursued without any regard for consequences to self or neighbor. The sin of “Pride” and “Me First” is the centerpiece of the Fall of Man. And then there is the eternal question. Atheists, agnostics, humanists and all of the world’s pagan religions have chosen to ignore the God of creation and his sole authority to determine humanity’s eternal destination. And with this authority comes a determinative moral code to live. These secularists answer the eternal question with. . . “no one!” Just pretend or convince yourself that the God of creation does not exist and the question of determinations to eternal life goes away. This is why they live life with little or no regard for their neighbor. We see this ultimately displayed in world leaders like Putin.

Then there is the lie that the God of creation cannot (will not) reach-out to us and provide an eternal solution to the rule of law of sin and death.

These are all lies that if accepted lead to temporal spiritual death and then eternal death which is separation from God for eternity.

**So, how did God disarm these lies?**

The number one answer, in my opinion, is by providing the solution over the law of sin and death by being the propitiation for the sins of the world (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 4:10, 2:2). Propitiation was prophesied by the prophet Isaiah about 700 years before the Incarnation.

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

Isaiah 53:5 (Also See: 1 Peter 2:24; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Hebrews 9:28)

This took place on the Cross. Remember, the English word “propitiation” is from the Greek - *Hilasterion* means *mercy seat.* This directly points to the “Day of Atonement” when the High Priest sprinkled sacrificed animal blood on top of the Ark of the Covenant called the *Mercy Seat.*

See sermon notes defining “propitiation” on website: roundtopchurch.org

August 7, 2022; “So, I Need to be Reconciled to God? Colossians 1: 19 – 20, pages 3-4

Then, God, as Jesus, rose from a dead state and walked from the tomb. . . commonly called the Resurrection.

These two “God acts” of “propitiation and resurrection” demonstrate God’s victory over the evil rulers and authorities. God was never at a loss to evil. Yes, there are some in the community of mankind who thought they had defeated God at the Cross when Jesus physically died. However! The Cross and the Resurrection were a public display for all humanity to witness God’s superiority over temporal life and death. Fallen man sees death as a leverage over them to be feared, but God, the Creator of life, demonstrated His superiority over temporal life . . . over sin and death at the Cross and the Resurrection. God created life and He can resurrect life.

 **Matthew 10:28** "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

The two acts of God “propitiation and resurrection” were the physical acts of God. In addition, God’s Spirit works in the hearts and minds of Believers, so we can disarm Satan’s evil that preys upon us all the time. Remember Job 1:7, when Satan reports himself to be “roaming about on the earth and walking around on it”.

Therefore, God indwells Believers’ hearts with attributes from His nature to disarm the enemies of love, grace, forgiveness and peace which was witnessed at the Cross and at the empty tomb. **Romans 12:20-22** encompasses all of these. "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Love** is unconditional. (1 Corinthians 13)

**Grace** is unmerited favor. (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 11:6)

**Forgiveness** is empowered by God’s Holy Spirit. (Mark 11:25-26;

Matthew 6:12; Romans 12:14-21)

**Peace** is to remove the enmity and strife, that is the dividing wall.

**Ephesians 2:13-18**

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the **enmity**, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having **put to death the enmity.**

17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;

18 for through Him we both have our **access** in one Spirit to the Father.

**The Power of God’s Love Beamed from the Cross**

God’s love beamed out to fallen humanity at the Cross when Jesus said, “It is finished!” (John 19:30) and “Father, forgive them. . .” (Luke 23:34). Only the power of God’s love and grace could come forward with these two statements in the face of murderous enemies to offer peace to all.

**First** - God, as Jesus Christ, **finished all the work** (John 19:30) to pay the debt of sin leaving nothing for humanity to do. This means water-baptism was not necessary, nor recital of religious oaths, nor pilgrimages to be endured. Surrendering “of the heart” to God is not a work but a spiritual acquiescence of a person’s will. This is circumcision of the heart and rebirth of spirit (Deuteronomy 30:6; John 3). And, only God can approve a person’s surrender to Him. Only God, as Jesus Christ, can accomplish the baptism of Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16). This Baptism by God (God act) places the Spirit of God into a repentant person’s heart.

It is sad and most unfortunate that more than half of the leaders of churches that call themselves “Christian” teach that you have to be water-baptized to be approved/accepted by God. So, hundreds of millions of people live with unnecessary spiritual baggage because they were wrongly taught by a robed person cloaked in manmade tradition. These teachings cannot be Biblically supported. I will be available to visit with anyone or any leader to share with them how they can be released from the burden of carrying this religious baggage. I know, it is almost impossible for a person to admit that they have not been told the truth by people they love and respect. I am not saying they were intentionally lied to but through ignorance they were taught. Then there are the leaders that know better or should have known better but chose not to pursue the truth in God’s Word. These leaders, if they admitted their error, would have to give-up their un-Scriptural self-proclaimed “mediator” position they have worked so hard to attain and maintain. (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:6, 9:15, 12:24)

**Second** – The words “**Father forgive them**” that Jesus spoke from the Cross opened the door for everyone to be forgiven by direct access to Him. Jesus’ words encapsulate all the meaning/purpose of the Incarnation. God provided what no person could accomplish. Only God can give fallen humanity fatherly advice about forgiveness as we see in Romans.

**Romans 12:14-21**

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

20 "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Let us talk about that fact that people do not have to earn forgiveness (salvation) through good works like “water-baptism”!**

**You shall know them by their fruit/works!**

John the Baptist tells the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to be water-baptized. . . “you brood of vipers. . .” "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” **(Matthew 3:7-10).**

John knew that these religious leaders were just there to be seen doing a good work, but their hearts were evil. John told them that they should have fruit/work that represented repentance. Basically, John called them liars in public. This is a tough passage of Scripture holding the religious leaders responsible for burdening the people with unnecessary religious baggage just like religious leaders do in our time. These statements from John the Baptist correlate directly with the context of the Book of James (chapter 2), teaching about faith and works.

**18** “But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

**[Take away the Pharisees’ and Sadducees’ works of show and they did not have faith.]**

**19** You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

 **20** But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

**[Faith produces works. Without works, then a person’s faith is questioned.]**

The Pharisees and Sadducees had plenty of works to show but they lacked faith. So, their works alone did not justify them to God. If they would have had faith, they would have not only had works but good works that benefited people not just works that made themselves look good. James gets to the point in verse 2:19. Satan/demons agree that God is God who incarnated Himself as Jesus to die on the Cross for the sins of the world to be resurrected teaching eternal life and then ascending to Heaven to return one day to judge the quick and the dead. No problem in believing these facts. However, Satan and demons only agree to these facts. They do not follow God but rebel. They refuse to access (surrender to God) the Power of the Cross to bring an end to the enmity between them and God.

So, it is surrendering faith that saves. This is why James declares in verse 2:20 that faith without works is useless. I mean . . . the demons have faith but no works for God. Demons do not have surrendering faith. Surrendering faith to God produces good works which shows a person is justified by Him **. . . James 2:24** You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

**The Power of The Cross Fulfills the Law**

Remember, Jesus said He came to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5:17). Not one person could be saved by keeping the Law code given to Moses, because not one person could keep the Law perfectly. Scripture specifically states that sacrifices made by the priest were insufficient (Hebrews 10:11) to remove sin. Only God, as Jesus, “The” Christ, could and did live a sinless life to become that perfect sacrifice making Him the one person in history qualified to die for the sins of the world (Hebrews 10:10, 12; Hebrews 4:15, 7:26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22; Isaiah 53:9).

This all sounds somewhat barbaric. However, the fallen condition of mankind is barbaric. The Cross gets the attention of fallen barbaric mankind. Once a person sees or hears of the Cross of Christ, they have a decision to make. . .the decision to be relieved of the weight and burden of sin’s guilt. True, some are in rebellion and have been turned over to their own desires and choose to live for an eternity separated from God and His love.

Without God’s Spirit indwelling the hearts and minds of people, they are lost to their own demise. Human history is proof of the destructive free-fall of mankind into an unretrievable pit of evil. . . unless they respond to God’s Holy Spirit convicting their hearts of sin. We see that God reaches-out to us as seen through the prophet Isaiah.

"Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other.”

**Isaiah 45:22**

**For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him;**

**for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD**

 **WILL BE SAVED." Romans 10:12-13**

 **AMEN**