**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

 ***Raised in Christ’s Victory***

 ***Colossians 3:1-4***

 **November 13th, In the Year of Our Lord 2022**

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

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 I want to say upfront that this sermon is designed to give to someone who is not a Christian and does not have (or a very limited) understanding of God and His Word. I am purposely repeating teachings to make specific points clear.

My experience with those who have dismissed God and His Word are those that have naively believed a 60-second soundbite on T.V. that science has proved God does not exist. Of course, this feeds into the fallen human lifestyle of desiring not being held accountable for their statements and actions.

The second common category is those that have been hurt by someone who went to church. So, in their hurt, they blame God and everyone for one person’s action. Obviously, Satan desires a person to live a life of unforgiveness, bitterness, hate and discontent.

And then there are those who were raised in institutional religions who as adults have escaped their oppressors but now associate all the “church world” with their abusive upbringing.

 The final category is those that have lived a rebellious life. Perhaps they have served time in prison, or they may be in prison, and they tell themselves that they are too bad to be accepted by God. We point to the criminal on the cross beside Jesus who surrendered to the Lord from his heart, and Jesus told him that he would be with Him in Paradise (Luke 23:43).

God chose people (Matthew 28:19 Great Commission) and nature (Romans 1:18-20ff) as the instruments to witness His Truth. It is unfortunate that some people routinely fail to be that life-witness God intended them to be. However, God still calls-out to people through nature. Therefore, the Founders of America called upon Nature’s God as the power and authority to base their cause. We all have failed at this witnessing responsibility at some point in our lives, because we make mistakes. Believers are all sinners in the hands of a loving God (1 John 1:5-10).

 Therefore, with the love of God at work in us (Believers), we strive to put the best witness forward each day. God gave us His Word in order to assist us in living the life He has planned for. God’s Word provides a written spiritual purpose and mission for life. God’s Word is reliable and infallible for the purpose of communicating God’s will. In our materialistic world, some seek to create God in a test tube. . . and when they cannot they announce that God does not exist. I have previously said that you cannot create grace, love, forgiveness, joy, hope, gentleness, kindness, patience, and goodness in a test tube. These qualities and characteristics of God’s eternal nature are infallible. They cannot be created by man.

Let us now read God’s Word.

**Colossians 3:1**

**Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ**,

[If you have died with Christ] (Colossians 2:20)

keep seeking the things above,

where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

 2 Set your mind on the things above,

 not on the things that are on earth.

 3 For **you have died** and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed,

then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

**Raised:** Greek- συνηγέρθητε synegerthete –

cause someone to rise up with another figuratively.

Ephesians 2:6; Col 2:12; 3:1.

 **Colossians 3:1-4 presents basic questions and answers most people have.**

1. **What is a main purpose/mission in this life?**
2. **Is there life after death?**
3. **What determines our state after this life is over?**
4. **Where do we go after we physically die?**

All four of these questions and their answers are tied together and are inseparable. There is not one answer that does not merge with the other.

1. **Purpose of Life? Eternal Relationship with God**

**To be united under grace and love with God and each other.**

**(John 3:16)**

I know. . . Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is a well-known quote from the American Declaration of Independence.

**We hold these truths** to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are **endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,** that among these are **Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--**That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness.

What truths are they referencing to in paragraph two? One Truth stand-out.

“. . .the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them,”

**Key Point:** The Founders knew that our Creator (Nature’s God) gave us Rights that He exclusively granted. And they knew and recognized that no other authority possessed these Rights to give.

With this said. . . God created all of us in His image (Genesis 1:26, 27), and His image is love. Remember, God is love (1 John 4:8). God loved us first (1 John 4:19) and calls/invites us to respond to His *love-call* by surrendering our hearts and minds to Him to be spiritually reborn (John 3:16). This is Jesus’ baptism of spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16) symbolized in water-baptism.

1. **Life After Death?**

The naturalist/materialist will stand on their atheistic stubborn stump and cry that humanity’s existence is a random happenstance of cosmic dust without meaning, purpose or direction. And that when we die our material bodies return and disseminate to the earth/environment. They believe there is not any eternal soul and therefore, not any eternal life.

 However, life’s experiences and observations are presented in God’s Word that prove to any spiritually conscience person that there is life after death. Life is too complex and intentionally designed to be formed by a happenstance random process. I have preached on these proofs numerous times. To be brief, I refer to one book, “Undeniable”, Dr. Douglas Axe, as a good place to start.

 Spiritual knowledge is the basis of all knowledge. Why? Because spiritual knowledge is not blind.

 So, what does the apostle Paul say? Paul’s witness is that we

Believers have been ‘raised up’ with Christ. This uniting with Christ by our surrendering faith enables us to join Him in the next life. This is witnessed in verse 4, “*will be revealed with Him in glory*”. *Glorification* is the Believer’s final state in Heaven.

**Romans 8:17** and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. (See also Romans 8:30).

 Reading the Bible, we see that there are three events God intends for our lives. First, we are called to be “regenerated”. This means we are brought into a right-standing (righteous) relationship with God (**Titus 3:4-7**). This is being “justified” to God. Notice in verse 5, it is the Holy Spirit that conducts the washing of regeneration and renewing, not a person (Church official).

**Titus 3:4-7**

4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared,

5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

 After regeneration into a right-standing relationship with God, Believers are called to grow and mature in a process called *sanctification*. Believers are called to be spiritually maturing into the image of Christ.

**Ephesians 4:11-13**

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man,

to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Then. . . when we finally graduate from this life, we will be “glorified” with the Lord. Believers will inherit an imperishable state and put on the imperishable, and this mortal will put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:52-58). This is because Death in ‘swallowed-up’ in the victory of God’s work as Jesus Christ.

**3. What determines our state after this life is over?**

God’s determinants begin with “free will choice” as we see demonstrated in Genesis 2:17 when He presented Adam a decision to make. That is to eat or not to eat from the forbidden tree. It is a clear-cut choice. This informs us of the free-will-choice environment God established for all people. I am fully aware of other teachings that use Scripture out-of-context to facilitate a non-free-will-choice view. (I am available to review those with anyone.)

 Simply stated. . . God allows every person to determine their eternal state of life. This is what free-will-choice is. No one will be forced by God to call upon Him. But anyone who does call upon the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:13).

We will all live forever. The question is where? God has revealed Himself to everyone from the beginning (Romans 1;18ff). With free-will-choice available to all, God openly invites us to respond to Him by surrendering our hearts and minds to His Holy Spirit’s calling. People respond by surrendering to God, asking Him to change their hearts and turn their lives. Again, the word “repent” represents this turning. This enables a person to see and enter the kingdom of God.

Remember, Jesus told Nicodemus (in John 3) was that he had to be reborn of spirit to even see and then enter the kingdom of God.

**4. Where do we go after we physically die?**

There are many passages of Scripture pointing to and detailing two destinations for all of us in the next life. . . Heaven or Hell. There have been many names assigned to these eternal destinations. And, yes, these destinations are permanent and not reversable. There are not any round-trip tickets or lay-over stops like the theocratic motivated reasoned “purgatory.” There is not any reincarnation or second chance at life. The second, third, fourth, fifth and unlimited opportunities to surrender to God are given in this life. We see this finality in Jesus’ own words when He gives the account of the Rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16). I encourage all to read the whole story. Let us pick up the account when Jesus says. . .

25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.

26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'

27 "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house--

28 for I have five brothers-- in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

29 "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

30 "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'

31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

 **(Luke 16:25-31)**

I can cite more Scriptures (example: Revelation 20-22) to highlight the eternal destinations that await all of us. However, I see that Jesus’ reality check by witnessing the facts in Luke 16 provide for us clarity to the existence of Heaven and Hell. I see that the essential/crucial/vital point, about eternal life in a place we call Hell, is separation from God and His love. Hell is the constant weeping and gnashing of teeth in an eternal life of regret in the absence of God’s love and peace. God’s provision of free-will-choice gave all the opportunity to choose Him.

 In review of God’s words from **Colossians 3:1-4**,spoken through Paul, we receive the answers to eternal truths.

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**AMEN**