**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

***Knowledge Saves***

 ***Colossians 2:18-23***

 **November 6th, 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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**Colossians 2:18** **Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize**

 by delighting in self-abasement

 and the worship of the angels,

 taking his stand on visions he has seen,

 inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

In Colossians 2:18 and following, Paul uses the previous teaching (verses) for a foundation to focus attention and make application to the Believer’s lives in Colossae. The Gospel is just not a feel-good book. . . it is foundational to live the life God intended/designed. So, what was stated in the verses that is foundational?

That God, as Jesus Christ, canceled the certificate of debt consisting of hostile decrees against us, He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. God’s action disarmed the rulers and authorities, making a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Jesus Christ. Therefore, no one is to act as your judge. (Summation from Colossians 2:14-16)

Paul contrasts what he says in the previous verses to verse 18, from which we can say that. . . false judges, if allowed, deprive people of their godly prize. In this case. . . false judges, if believed, defraud a person of their peace. The fraud takes place when people accept the deception . . . implementing and substituting these deceptions. These fraudulent teachings are derived from false judges or from their own mind. Then they rely upon the fraud-substitute teaching to bring peace to their lives, which never comes because they spend their lives pursuing the works and merits to appease the fraudulent teachings. Peace with God and their neighbor become elusive.

 One of the reasons this happens is that people do not know God’s Word. They do not read God’s Word. They are biblically ignorant. We read from the prophet Hosea who prophesied to Israel (Northern Kingdom) in middle to late 8th century B.C. before their destruction took place in 722 B.C. By rejecting God, they rejected His Word. Therefore, they did not have God’s knowledge.

**Hosea 4:1** Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel, For the LORD has a case against the inhabitants of the land,

**Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land.** 2 There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed.

3 Therefore the land mourns, And everyone who lives in it languishes Along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, And also the fish of the sea disappear.

4 Yet let no one find fault, and let none offer reproof; For your people are like those who contend with the priest. 5 So you will stumble by day, And the prophet also will stumble with you by night; And I will destroy your mother.

6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. **Because you have rejected knowledge,** I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. 7 The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame. 8 They feed on the sin of My people And direct their desire toward their iniquity.

9 And it will be, like people, like priest; So I will punish them for their ways And repay them for their deeds. 10 They will eat, but not have enough; They will play the harlot, but not increase, Because they have stopped giving heed to the LORD. 11 Harlotry, wine and new wine take away the understanding.

 In verse 19, we read that the reason false judges operate is due to their dependence on themselves and not God, and that their growth in their self-understandings is not from God but from a fleshy mind (v.18).

**Colossians 2:19** and not holding fast to the head, [Christ Jesus]

 from whom [Christ Jesus] the entire body,

being supplied and held together

by the joints and ligaments,

grows with a growth which is from God.

Continuing in verse 20, we see that Paul challenges the congregation in Colossae, like he often does to the recipients in all his letters, with the question. . . “If you have died with Christ?”

**20** **If you have died with Christ**

to the elementary principles of the world,

why, as if you were living in the world,

do you submit yourself to decrees, such as,

**21** "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!"

**22** (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—

 in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?

**23** These are matters which have, to be sure,

the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion

and self-abasement

and severe treatment of the body,

but are of no value against fleshly indulgence

From these words, Paul writes. . . we can assume that at least some of the people were taken-in by false teachings and were observing manmade commandments. And what is sad for those who have allowed themselves to be deceived and taken-in by false teachers and judges is that their teaching has not any value against the lure of the fallen world (verse 23).

Self-made religion giving the appearance of wisdom was and is a problem in the Church. In Paul’s letters, he is constantly correcting false teachings. As an example, in the opening remarks of the letter Paul wrote to the Galatians, we can see that he is a bit irritated at their willingness to accept false teachings.

**Galatians 1:6-7, 10-12**

6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1:6-7)

In Galatians 1:8 and 9, Paul states those who teach a distorted Gospel are to be accursed. Then he says. . .

10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

(See also Matthew 24:5; Luke 21:18 Galatians 3:1; 1 Timothy 1:3)

With all this said, we could write and preach volumes on false teachings that have come into the Believer’s Church and have led many people astray. These false teachings, once believed, activate the human emotions of fear and guilt. Therefore, they lay heavy spiritual baggage on people which they carried throughout their lives. These range from appeasing a fraudulent mediating leadership to work of endless appeasement in order to gain and maintain salvation.

All of this is unnecessary and not asked of us by God. Remember, the Jewish religious leaders added 613 rules to the Law that heavily burdened the people. Since then, manmade religious organizations have added thousands. These range from “no meat of Friday” to pilgrimages. In contrast, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is free because God as Jesus completed all the work on the Cross. There are additional and numerous scripture citations we can make and have made in the past highlighting this truth. This includes Jesus’ statement from the Cross, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). . . meaning that He has completed all the work necessary for our salvation. . . that is to gain and maintain salvation. This does not mean a person only acquires an insurance policy. No! No! No! True faith automatically produces good works. Living-faith from the heart is a way of life (James 2).

Scripture details that we do not have any need of a mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). I have said previously that God is an equal opportunity Savior and needs no one to intercede for Him. Romans 10:13 says that anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. (Which is a quote from the prophet Joel (2:32). Notice the Scripture does not say. . . *anyone who calls upon the name of* (you fill in the blank*) will be saved.*

Obviously, there is John 3:15,16 . . . so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:18, 36, 6:40, 11:25, 20:31)

When a person calls upon the Lord, like those in Acts 2:37, with a pierced heart due to surrendering to God’s Holy Spirit conviction. . . they then humble themselves to God’s Spirit to indwell their hearts enabling them to **turn** (repents) their lives from a life of sin and death to a life overcoming the power of sin and death. This indwelling regeneration by God, of their hearts and minds, empowers a person to follow the Lord’s commands. I repeat often what Jesus said. . . If you love me, you will keep my commands (John 14:15). (See also John 14:21, 15:10; 1 John 2:3, 5:3; 2 John 2:6.) The reason I repeat these Scriptures is because. . . 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 (Jude 1:4).

From these Scriptures in God’s Word, we can make the statement that God exclusively seeks a heart-felt spiritual response from us by faith. Faith means to trust and commit. We are called to faith/belief (trust and commit) to God. This is why Scriptures like Ephesians 2:8 and Romans 4 tell us that “only” by faith can we be justified to God. I like to say. . . God calls us to have a “surrendering” faith. We see in James 2:19 that faith is just not an agreement statement like the demons have. Demons believe (agree) and shudder because they do not trust and commit to God. So, we see that the words “belief/faith” (Greek Believe=pisteuo / faith = pistis) have not only the components to “agree” but to “trust and commit.” I like the way the word believe is used in Matthew 21:22 . . . "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." The Greek word πιστεύοντες (pisteuontes) is translated “believing” (present active verb) as denoting to confidently rely on God for help. Obviously, the demons do not rely upon God for help and confidence. This is why Jesus said . . .

18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'(Matthew 7:18-23)

Further reflection upon Paul’s reference to “**if you have died with Christ**” calls back to being circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead (Colossians 2:11-12). Obviously, this a spiritual accomplishment without the aid of human hands. And this is a spiritual statement of qualification highlighting a person’s heart, mind and will has changed by the hands of God. This is the spiritual working of “belief and faith” in the life of the believer. Jesus’ baptism of Spirit and fire. . . that is, circumcision of the heart = spiritual rebirth of a person is symbolized in water-baptism. Paul states in Romans 6:8, “Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,” (Romans 6:4; 2 Timothy 2:11). Therefore, the words of Jesus spoken to Nicodemus. . . “whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

 **AMEN**