**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

***Martus***

**Philippians 1:18-30**

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

February 20th In the Year of Our Lord - (Anno Domini A.D.) 2022

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

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

We start today’s sermon with verse 18 to provide a continuing context from last week’s sermon in Paul’s letter to the congregation in Philippi. We need to keep in mind that Paul was writing from his incarcerated state, chained to a Roman soldier who was ever-present to guard him from escaping. However, unlikely, being that Paul is an older man at this time in the ministry. Another observation . . . I wonder if the guards could read and, if so, read Greek. Just think about Paul’s situation under which he was writing. Whatever he wrote was subject to be read by the guard or the guard’s superiors. From reading Paul’s letters, there was nothing in them calling for a revolution against Rome. Remember, he was originally charged with threatening the public peace in Jerusalem by the Jews and Romans (Acts 23). I suspect that Paul’s letters were read and found to be harmless. Thus, they were allowed to be sent by personal carrier. Who was that person?

**Philippians 2:25-3:1**

25 But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; 26 because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

27 For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. 29 Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; 30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

Moving to today’s sermon . . . in chapter 1 of Philippians, Paul shared his concern that the Gospel be conveyed through pure motives and not via envy and strife. However, he still saw a gain in the proclamation of the Gospel even though the conveyor may have the wrong motives, and he rejoiced all the same. In addition, **Paul rejoiced** in his imprisonment because he still was able to proclaim the Good News regardless of his personal circumstances, and, in verse 19, he foresaw his deliverance.

Paul was rejoicing because he believed through the prayers of the Philippian saints and provision of Jesus’ Spirit that he would be **delivered**. Paul accepted **deliverance** in two ways: to be released and set free to continue his earthly ministry, or to be joined with the Lord eternally because his temporal life will end due to martyrdom. Let us read the biblical text.

**Philippians 1: 18**

What then?

Only that in every way,

whether in pretense or in truth,

**Christ is proclaimed;**

and in this I rejoice.

**Yes, and I will rejoice,**

**19** for I know that this will turn out for my **deliverance**

through your **prayers**

and the **provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,**

**20** according to my earnest expectation and hope,

that I will not be put to shame in anything,

but that with all **boldness**,

Christ will even now, as always,

be exalted in my body, by life or by death.

**21** For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

We can see that Paul presented himself with boldness, and, to highlight his boldness, he accepted his future regardless of which direction it led. It may have led to physical death or an extension of his temporal life. Remember the life-context from which Paul was writing. He was a man who had been beaten and left for dead numerous times. Life for him was tough. We have this description of life for Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth.

**2 Corinthians 11:21-28**

**21** To my shame I must say that we have been weak by comparison. But in whatever respect anyone else is bold-- I speak in foolishness-- I am just as bold myself.

**22** Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

**23** Are they servants of Christ?-- I speak as if insane-- I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

**24** Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.

**25** Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

**26** I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;

**27** I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

**28** Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

**No doubt Paul had fought the good fight.** We see these words in Paul’s last letter to Timothy. Biblical scholars believe 2 Timothy was the last letter Paul wrote before he was martyred no later than 68 A.D. in Rome due to his second imprisonment.

**2 Timothy 4:6-8**

**6** For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

**7** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

**8** in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

**Continuing in Philippians 1**

**22** But if I am to live on in the flesh,

this will mean fruitful labor for me;

and I do not know which to choose.

**23** But I am hard-pressed from both directions,

having the desire to depart and be with Christ,

for that is very much better;

**24** yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

**25** Convinced of this,

I know that I will remain

and continue with you all for your progress

and joy in the faith,

**26** so that your proud confidence in me

may abound in Christ Jesus

The biblical text here speaks for itself. This is why God’s Word is so powerful. In the face of temporal death, Paul had an eternal view of life. Life did not stop there, even if Paul was martyred for witnessing the Gospel of God. Paul knew that life continued for an eternity.

Compared to our modern-day western civilization, the world Paul lived was a remote place. However, in our time, there are countries that are just as hostile to Christian Missionaries as the Romans and Jews were in the 1st century. History records that Paul was not alone in facing death. Remember, Stephen was stoned to death (Acts 6) for his witness about Christ. Paul recounts Stephen’s death in his defense to the Jewish Leaders in Jerusalem.

**Acts 22:20**

'And when the blood of Your witness (Greek: μάρτυρός/marturos) Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.'

**Witness** = Strong’s 3144 / μάρτυς martus martus

Meaning: a witness Origin: a prim. word

Usage: witness(12), witnesses(23).

Notes: Acts 23:11; 26:16; Acts 22:14

Peter and John were arrested and threatened by the authorities, but they told the authorities that they had to obey God (Acts 4:19-21). Historians report that Peter, like Paul, was eventually martyred in Rome. John was exiled to the Island of Patmos. John is believed to be the only disciple that was not martyred. A disciple of John was Polycarp who lived from 69-155 A.D and was the Bishop of Smyrna in modern day Turkey. When Polycarp was 86 years old, he was martyred for his faith in Christ. The Roman Proconsul asked Polycarp to renounce Christ and swear to Caesar. We have his last words recorded by witnesses.

**“86 years have I have served him, and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?” Polycarp’s Martyrdom (ca. 69-ca. 155)**

**What does all this tell us?**

I see that life was hard and, at times, brutal, especially toward those that went against the social and cultural norms that the state supported or adopted for public policy. Regardless of the title we use - the Good News, the Message, the Way, the Gospel of God - God’s Word is a contradiction and, to some, offensive. This has been the case from the very beginning of time. Starting with Adam and continuing through Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses to the Prophets. . . to John the Baptist. . . to Jesus. . . to the death of John at the close of the 1st century, God’s witnesses have met opposition. Par for the course.

Thus, with Paul, I can understand that leaving a challenging life behind was not a far leap to make. I can see that life in Paul’s time was viewed as cheap and short-lived. This is in polar contrast to dying for an eternal cause elevating your life status to count for something and be remembered eternally. . . in addition to living with someone forever who loves you – God the Father.

The belief in God that claims a person to be created in His image to have a personal eternal relationship. . .who has meaning, purpose and a directed life . . . is in stark contrast to the Roman world that lined the roads with crucified people by the thousands who did not fit their mold for humanity.

**By staying in the world, what does Paul seek from the Philippians?**

**27** Only conduct yourselves

in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ,

so that whether I come and see you or remain absent,

I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit,

with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

**28** in no way alarmed by your opponents—

which is a sign of destruction for them,

but of salvation for you,

and that too, from God.

**29** For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake,

not only to believe in Him,

but also, to suffer for His sake,

**30** experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me,

and now hear to be in me.

**In summation of verses 27-30**, Paul calls upon the Philippians to live up to the standard Christ has deemed worthy. To achieve this standard, they are to live in unison under God’s Spirit which will guide them to attain the Lord’s plan for their lives. In fact, this is the only way to reach the standard of life to which God calls us as individuals and community.

From Paul’s words and by our own experiences, living the Christian life witnessing to others may cause those in opposition to God to complain. The Christian way of life calls for peace with God and neighbor. . . which creates success both economically and physically.

Unfortunately, other alternative life-plans are not as successful and it shows. These opposition plans always demean others and use a person as a means to an end. These plans do not pursue peace with God or neighbor. We see this in political systems like socialism and communism who always complain about others who achieve a higher life standard by being responsible in use of their God-given abilities. These are the ones who complain. Their complaints are a sign of their demise.

**About what is there to complain? People are their own worst enemy.**

It is my observation that the biblical Christian society produces a stable economic state and, by-in-large, a healthier class of people who develop their God-given mind in education and do not live destructive lives abusing their bodies with drugs and violence. God’s life-plan affords Christian societies to achieve higher standards of living in contrast to those in rebellion to God, who are jealous. The “Rebellious” then conjure false charges against God’s people and claim an unfairness. They claim they are not given the same opportunity and then charge discrimination. All the “Rebellious” need to do. . . is stop living their destructive lives of producing fatherless families and gang infested cities. To do this, they must surrender their hearts and minds to God. They need to stop making themselves their own god. However, they choose not to do so because the leader of rebellion (Satan) against God rules their heart. They have chosen their rebellious path for so long that God has turned them over to their own desires (Romans 1:24). Jesus describes these kinds of people and their leaders in Matthew 23. These are commonly called the seven woes. We can overlay the titles of “scribe, Pharisee, and hypocrites” with many names of today’s current political, religious and media leaders who are calling on the masses to follow them. Here is an abbreviated list.

**Matthew 23 “Seven Woes”**

1 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, 2 saying:

"The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;

3 therefore all that they tell you, do and observe,

but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.

4 "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.

5 "But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men;

. . .

[1] 13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,

because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

14 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,

because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore, you will receive greater condemnation.

The 2nd “woe” in verse 14 of the NAS is taken from Mark 12:40/ Luke 20:47 and added here by scribes. The text is part of the New Testament but technically, this verse is not positioned here in the oldest manuscripts. This leaves seven (7) “woes” in Matthew and not eight (8).

[2] 15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,

because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

[3] 16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the

temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.'

[Jesus is challenging them to tell the truth.]

[4]23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. 24 "You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

[5] 25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.

26 "You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

[6] 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

28 "So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men,

but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

[7] 29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,

30 and say, 'If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.'

31 "So you testify against yourselves,

that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

32 "Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers.

33 "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?

Paul sees that the world complains about the Gospel of God which is a salvation from God.

**How does this look in our world today?**

The Christian life produces individuals and families that are at peace with God and their neighbor. We live with the image of God in us. God is love, and love lived-out is joy, kindness, gentleness, forgiveness, self-control, which produce right actions, perseverance.

**AMEN**