**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

***Knowing, Witnessing the Truth - Saves Lives***

**Philippians 3:1-6**

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

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

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**Good To Know:** By whom and when were the chapter and verse numbers added to the Bible?

Old and New Testament Chapter Numbers – Added in 1227 A.D. by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1382 A.D., John Wycliffe’s English Bible was the first Bible to use chapter numbers.

Old Testament Verse Numbers – Added 1448 A.D. by Nathan, a Jewish rabbi.

New Testament Verse Numbers – Added in 1555 A.D. by Robert (Stephanus) Estienne, who published a “Latin” Bible with both chapter/verse system incorporating Nathan’s chapter divisions.

Complete “English” Bible with chapter/verse system – 1560 A.D. Geneva Bible

Note: All these publications predate the King James Bible of 1611.

**Philippians**

Scholars have assigned the next portion of Paul’s letter to be in chapter 3 of 4 chapters giving the appearance to be about half of the document. We draw attention to the first word in Philippians 3:1. The translation team of the 1611 King James Bible chose the English word “Finally” in place of Tyndale’s translation of 1534, “Moreover”, to start the sentence. Verse 3:1 is not Paul’s last words. Paul is simply transitioning to the remainder of his text.

**Phil. 3:1a** Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

Finally: Strong’s 3062 λοιπός loipos / Meaning: the rest, the remaining

**Rejoice -** Paul sets-up what he is about to write by telling the Philippians to “rejoice” in the Lord. Jesus proclaims the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, in the Beatitudes. Believers are to rejoice, especially in the face of persecution. In this chapter, Paul is concerned about deviate teachings they are hearing from those that are mentally persecuting them for not adhering to their teaching.

**Previous Letters**

Evidently, Paul has written to them previously about this same concern. We do not have all the letters Paul wrote. We know from Colossians 4:16, Paul wrote a letter to the church in Laodicea that we do not have.

**Colossians 4:6** When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.

So, it stands to reason that Paul had previously written to the church in Philippi. Remember that Paul had lived with them about 10 years prior to writing the letter we have today. It is hard to believe that Paul had not written them during that ten (+) years. These letters are personal. It is almost inconceivable that the only correspondence Paul’s friends received from him was one letter in ten years. Can you imagine if you had not heard from someone in ten years and then received a letter from them telling you how to live your life. It is just not probable. And then to have that one letter become part of a faith movement that changed the world. My view is that we only have a few of Paul’s letters that make-up the New Testament. Case-in-point. . . scholars see in the Biblical letters a reference to other letters.

What we call 1 Corinthians is at least Paul’s second letter. How do we know this? In 1 Corinthians 5:9, Paul refers to a previous letter. . . *“I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;”*

The letter we do not have… Paul receives a letter from Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 7:1, we read, *“Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman”.*

Another letter we do not have that scholars call the “Severe Letter” due to Paul’s reference in 2 Corinthians 7:8. . . *For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it-- for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while”*

So, we do not have at least three letters, two of which Paul penned. Analyzing the chronology of Paul’s four known letters, we do not have letters 1 and 3.

**Philippians 3:1b**. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

**Safeguard**

Now we see the aim of Paul’s teaching concerning false teachers and those who come after Paul leaves and teach a different worldview. We see this concern throughout Paul’s writings and with Jesus. In Galatians 1:6, we read. . *. 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.*

*(See also: 2 Peter 2:1; I Timothy 4:1; Acts 20:30.*

*Jesus warns: Matthew 7:15, 24:11,24; Mark 13:22.)*

Paul is direct in his words, not leaving any doubt about the severity of the situation. It was not the time then and now to be politically correct in identifying the enemies of God and what they teach. I see that the enemies of God want us to soft-sell their intentions and goals.

**Philippians 3:2**

 Beware of the **dogs,**

 beware of the **evil workers**,

beware of the **false circumcision**;

Where does Paul, the Hebrews of Hebrews, attain his understanding of circumcision? The Old Testament. God did establish the covenant with Abram (Genesis 17).

**Jeremiah 4:4** "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your heart, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Or else My wrath will go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds."

**Jeremiah 9:26** Egypt and Judah, and Edom and the sons of Ammon, and Moab and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart."

**Deuteronomy 10:16** "So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.

However, beyond the physical appearances, there was a deeper spiritual ramification that the Jewish leaders missed. We see this in Jesus’ seven woes in Matthew 23:25-28. . . 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.*

 *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.*

Matthew 23 is the most striking polemic recording Jesus’ observations about the Jewish religious leaders. It should be easy for us to see the application of Jesus’ words in identifying the religious leaders in our time who fit the same description. Who are they? These are all an abomination to God (Proverbs 6:16-19). Consider these four groupings to be an umbrella highlighting activities and teachings of the hypocrites Jesus identified.

**1.** **Moneychangers**: Anyone operating the church like a slot machine . . . meaning the health and wealth proclaimers populating television airways. You know, the “seed money” hypocrites who con their audiences out of their money so they can fly around in airplanes.

**2.** **Child Slavery:** Obviously, anyone who victimizes children. . . the “woes” apply to today. We all know that many who call themselves a Christian church have not only sexually victimized children but actively plot to do so by keeping perpetrators in office and hide their crime of lustful debauchery. We all know who they are. They are the remnant of the state church of the Dark Ages. It is a sad commentary upon humanity to hear the repeated news reports over the past several decades of the crimes of the state church’s leaders against children. Make no mistake, these evil people sought-out their vocation to place themselves in a position with children to assault them just like they pursued the Boy Scouts. Now “we all” see many politicians supporting false religious leadership in pursuit of public policy with the goal of indoctrinating children in public education to accept their assigned sexual role by the amoral atheist predators.

**3.** **Works Salvation:** Anyone teaching a works salvation. Meaning anyone contradicting these passages of Scripture. There are too many passages of Scripture to list. I ask anyone to consider this observation.

**Why would God incarnate Himself to be one of us and live through the trials and tribulations as Jesus did in order to suffer death on the Cross and look down from His Cross and say. . .**

**“This is not enough; you have to add your works to my Cross to be saved.”**

**Ephesians 2:8** “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

**Romans 4:2** For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

**1 Peter 1:5** who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

**Romans 3:24** being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

**2 Timothy 1:9** who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

**4. False Mediators**: False mediators are anyone claiming you have to go through their religious rites to be saved and receive forgiveness of sin through them to have a good-standing relationship with God. This generally revolves around exclusive claims overseeing water baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These groups will claim that the only proper and acceptable path to God is through them and their hierarchy. Obviously, the Dark Age state church leads the pack. It is of note that many people known as “Reformers” during the “protest” Reformation simply claimed they had a special revelation from God and demanded others to adhere to their teaching. Case-in-point . . . John Calvin, the founder of the Presbyterian church, ordered the execution of people for disagreeing with his theological views. There are numerous historical records to this fact and easily found on the www. False mediators are just as numerous today as ever. This list is too long to list. Remember this verse. . . *For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*, (1 Tim. 2:5)

Paul has an answer to his concern in identifying “**true circumcision**” which is not a physical act but a spiritual heart-changing transformation. Paul points to himself in verses 3-6 demonstrating that he was never justified to God by works in adhering to the Law of Moses. Paul describes the Law of Moses to be given by God as a tutor leading to Christ (Galatians 3:24). Once again, for those who have not read Hebrew’s chapter 9 and 10, I urge you to do so. The Law designed by God was never intended to remove sin.

**Philippians 3** (cont.)

 **3** for **we** are the **true circumcision**, (Deuteronomy 30:6)

who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus

and put no confidence in the flesh,

 **4** although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh.

If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh,

I far more:

 **5** circumcised the eighth day,

(God establishes covenant with Abram- Genesis 17)

of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin,

a Hebrew of Hebrews;

as to the Law, a Pharisee;

 **6** as to zeal, a persecutor of the church;

as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

Paul provides a detailed teaching clarifying God’s intent for circumcision in Galatians 5:1-10.

**Galatians 5:1** It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

 2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.

 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

 5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

 7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?

 8 This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.

 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.

 10 I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is.

**Why does any of this matter to us or anyone?**

Many may view these passages of Scripture, and the whole Bible, as a collection of fanatical religious writings that are ‘out of touch’ with modern society.

**Our Response**

Paul is writing to bring clarity of the Gospel Message in order for people to receive the Truth about God and His salvation plan for everyone. God’s Holy Spirit constantly works through Paul to accurately deliver the Good News and expose false teaching.

**The false teaching Paul is addressing is the belief that a saving and maintained relationship with God is predicated on works regardless of a person’s heart condition.**

We Believers today are charged with the same commission the Apostles were. We are the Body of Christ who are to be that salt to the world (Matthew 5:13). We are not to hide the light of Christ’s indwelling spirit and message in us (Matthew 5:14-16).

God’s Word is the message to fallen humanity that calls out. . . *"Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other* (Isaiah 45:22).

**Witnessing in the Darkest of Times**

Due to our current world at war centered in Europe, the enemies of God are showing all the world their true beliefs and intent for the world. Evil at work on a world stage makes the starkest contrast with God that most people cannot miss. In a way, this makes evangelism easier in that Believers can point to the Savior of the World, Jesus, and highlight His peace, love, grace, forgiveness, humility, joy, happiness, kindness, gentleness, and self-control. Obviously, this is in contrast to the on-going evil being displayed through the faces of the Russian oligarchs and Vladimir Putin’s evil intent on a self-indulgent life which has and continues to take the lives of tens of thousands of people. . . they will also enslave anyone who they can force under their authority. This is evil at work in the hearts and minds of people who have surrendered their souls to Satan. Like their predecessors before them, being Lenin and Stalin, the current atheistic Russian leaders have been ‘turned over to their own desires’ and will not stop until they are dead.

Believers must tell those who are sitting on the fence from surrendering to God and to those atheists/agnostics they know. . . who claim to be moral, that their atheistic/agnostic belief system leads to wars and the murdering of untold millions of people. Why? Because atheists/agnostics do not view themselves or their neighbor to be created in God’s image. To them, we are all biological blobs to be herded for the selfish gain of anyone who has more power. Shall we not forget that atheists/agnostics are responsible over 60,000,000 (60 million) aborted babies in America. That number alone is monstrous. The truth is that they target babies in the womb in minority races because they see them to be a dredge on society and it is better to kill them in the womb than have them increase America’s most populated prison population. They populated the lie about a woman’s ‘right to choose’ to cover-up their real belief behind their agenda.

Sooner or later, the atheist/agnostic cannot stand to live with God’s people and given the political power pursues to destroy their way of life and their lives. This is exactly what Putin and his oligarchs are doing and have been in the process of doing their whole lives. Communism is a political tool evil used to destroy God’s people.

Here in America, the current occupant of the Oval Office and his political party are just a few steps away from attacking Biblical Christians the way the Putin-nites (Putin-ists) are attacking their neighbor. This is why understanding God’s Word and being able to accurately teach the Good News is important. There are reasons people reject man-made religion. It, too, seeks to enslave them.

I know, these are words that call for deep reflection upon our lives and our situation in life.

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

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**Amen**