**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

 ***Understanding Grace and Peace***

**Colossians 1:2**

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

June 26th, 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

Key Passage in Colossians – verse 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow - 1807-1882**

Most celebrated poet of the 19th century who wrote the poem Christmas Bells in 1863 during the Civil War. Like the “cold-war” of today. . . the nation was being torn apart, he penned these words. He was a Unitarian Christian. Being a free thinker, he did not associate himself with the mainline denominations of his day.

I heard the bells on Christmas Day

Their old, familiar carols play,

 And wild and sweet

 The words repeat

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,

The belfries of all Christendom

 Had rolled along

 The unbroken song

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,

The world revolved from night to day,

 A voice, a chime,

 A chant sublime

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth

The cannon thundered in the South,

 And with the sound

 The carols drowned

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent

The hearth-stones of a continent,

 And made forlorn [neglected, forsaken]

 The households born

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;

"There is no peace on earth," I said;

 "For hate is strong,

 And mocks the song

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:

"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;

 The Wrong shall fail,

 The Right prevail,

With peace on earth, good-will to men."

This poem is in the public domain.

It is obvious that Mr. Longfellow had a biblical worldview regarding God’s intent in the Incarnation. And what the world needed to heal its wars was peace from God.

Last Sunday, we looked at the first two verses in Paul’s letter to the Colossians (focused mainly on verse 1) which was filled with meaning from a Biblical worldview.

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,

and Timothy our brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

Time did not permit us to comment last Sunday on verse two. So, we will be benefited today by doing so. Verse one and two go together in that they identify the letter is from Paul and that the intended recipients are the Believers in Colossae. It needs to be noted that Paul knew his letters would be read by the first recipients and then copied and forwarded to other communities. How can we know this?

**Paul’s Peace with God**

From knowing the total context of Paul’s life and that the Christian communities to whom he wrote knew who he was, it is expected that the initial recipients would pass his letter forward. First, Paul’s personal encounter of meeting the Resurrected Lord on the road to Damascus is very compelling and much like the Old Testament accounts of God coming to men like Jonah or Jeremiah (see below citation) who became prophets of God. God’s objective was to work through these men to bring peace to all. 2 Peter 3:14-18 points to Paul as a person within the Believer’s community who was received as a voice for God much like the Old Testament prophets. Peter interchangeably refers to Paul’s letters and the rest of Scripture as though they are viewed by the Christian community to carry the same authority, power and truth from God. Peter and Paul were contemporaries martyred in Rome on or before 68 A.D.

**2 Peter 3:14-18**

14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, 15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

 God as Jesus Christ deliberately came to Paul on the road to Damascus and said that Paul was a chosen instrument of His. This is a direct comparison to the Old Testament prophets Jeremiah and Jonah as examples. God came to both of these men, and, like Paul, gave them assignments.

**Jeremiah 1:9** Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.

**Jonah 1:1** The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me."

 Like the Old Testament prophets referred to in 2 Kings 17 and Hosea . . . within the commissioning of Paul by God, Paul was to preach the message that would deliver people from their previous enslavement to (Egypt) the fallen world. And within this message of deliverance was instruction of how to live the life God calls all people. So, by God’s message preached through Paul, a Believer is to be kept in the fold of the Lord.

 It is noteworthy that God called Paul a chosen instrument of his (Acts 9:15) as He called the Old Testament prophets “My Servants”.

**Hosea 12:13** But by a prophet the LORD brought Israel from Egypt, And by a prophet he was kept.

**2 Kings 17:13** Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets."

 Therefore, we can see, due to Paul’s spiritual standing, God intended for his/Paul’s letters to be initially read by their first recipients and then copied and passed to other Christian communities to be included with the Old Testament as Scripture. All Scripture is inspired by God.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

**2 Peter 1:20-21**

20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

In fact, Paul’s letters did become Scripture. Proof of this. . . is that we have thirteen of Paul’s letters from the first century. The text of these letters survived, because they were treasured as Scripture, meticulously copied and passed onto generations. The earliest manuscript is dated to about 200 A.D. and is called p46 (in the Gregory-Aland numbering), because it is written on papyri. This manuscript is compared to the thousands of other New Testament manuscripts to give us the Greek New Testament we have today. This is why scholars and even atheistic scholars agree that there is a ninety-nine (99) percent accuracy in the Greek New Testament.

https://crossexamined.org/is-the-new-testament-reliable-erhman-refutes-ehrman/

**Worldview Highlights of Verse 1**

 Hopefully, from last week’s sermon, you will have an opportunity to share with someone who is not familiar with the Bible’s eternal truths related in the titles, names and phrases *apostle, Jesus Christ,* and *by the will of God.*

**Worldview Highlights of Verse 2**

In verse two, Paul calls the Believers in Colossae “*saints*” and “*brethren*”. In addition, he uses two powerful words, “*grace*” and “*peace*” that he assigns as being *from God our Father.*

**Saints and Brethren** are another way to acknowledge other Believers in Jesus Christ.

**Paul Quotes “Grace & Peace” in His 13 Letters’ Introductions: HMMMMM. . . must be important to Biblically understand in contrast to fallen humanities self-indulgent high-jacking of these words.**

**Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2;**

**Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2;**

**1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2;**

**1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 1:3**

**Grace:** God’s pathway to bring peace to all people is extended to everyone. Grace means unmerited favor. This specifically points to the Cross of Jesus Christ and His free gift of substitutionary atonement (John 3:16) accessed by anyone who humbly surrenders their heart to God. Grace is heart accessed not meritoriously earned or bought.

**Romans 3:23-24** 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

**Romans 5:15** But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

**Romans 5:17** For if by the transgression of the one, (Adam) death reigned through the one (Adam), much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

 Ephesians 2:8 is the most rememberable verse for most Christians.

 For by grace, you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Romans 3:20, 24, 28; Ephesians 2:16)

Peace with God is achieved by a heart-felt surrender to God which encompasses loving Him and your neighbor (Matthew 22:35-40) as the two greatest commands to obtain eternal life with God. And . . . proof of a heart-felt surrender is that those who love God follow His commands (John 14:21, 24). Grace is not to be viewed as a cheap device to be manipulated. Some people have falsely claimed God’s grace absolves them of their intentional amoral life practices without them repenting (turning) from those amoral life practices. These people do not follow the Lord’s commands. They only love themselves. The grace they falsely claim does not bring peace between them and God or their neighbor.

**Jude 1:4**

 **For 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.

**In The Beginning - Grace and Adam and Eve**

God gave Adam and Eve everything (Creation & Life) without cost. The Garden was a peaceful place until Adam and Eve rebelled against God, exhibited by their own choices (Genesis 3). Life itself is a grace gift. God’s provisions for eternal life are provided (made available) in grace (without cost) to bring an end to the enmity. Thus, bringing about peace. And again, eternal life with God is accessed by a heartfelt surrender to God’s love put forth by His grace.

So, God provided grace to the creation. God’s grace starts with humanity with the fact that He loved us first. Therefore, His love gave us freewill choice as seen with Adam in Genesis 2:17. Grace was not created by man to be manipulated but to be accessed to be set free. Grace was created by God to save fallen humanity from themselves. . . not for depraved people to use as an overlay sign to justify their licentiousness.

**Substitutionary Atonement and God’s Grace**

Before the Cross took place, substitutionary atonement was highlighted when God substituted a ram for Isaac (Genesis 22) about two thousand years before the incarnation. Romans 3:23-26 clearly states:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

**See Also:**

**1 Peter 2:24** and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed

**Isaiah 53:5** 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.1

**Hebrews 9:28** so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

 **PEACE:** Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) who came to the city of Peace (Jerusalem). Jerusalem is two words joined together.

Jerusalem: Hebrew יְרוּשָׁלַיִם Yerushalayim Yeru-shalayim Strong’s 3389

Jeru – Yeru: Hebrew means ‘will see and feel the awe of God’

Shalem - shalayim: Hebrew – wholeness, complete Strong’s 8003;

 The word Shalom (Strong’s 7965) is derived from Shalem.

So, the two words combined state. . .

‘They will see and feel the awe and wholeness/completeness of God’.

Therefore, they will be at peace. Being whole and complete in a relationship brings peace to the two parties.

Jerusalem was known as the place to be at peace with God. Peace was symbolized in the Temple’s inner room, the Holy of Holies, on the Day of Atonement when the Priest would sprinkle the blood of a sacrificed animal on the *mercy seat* atop the Ark of the Covenant. This was only a shadow of the Cross (Hebrews 8:4, 10:1). This event pointed to the Cross. Where there is forgiveness there is a place for peace with God and neighbor. Christ indwelling Holy Spirit in our hearts is now the place of atonement. . . the Holy of Holies. . . the place for peace.

Remember Melchizedek was the king of Salem (Genesis 14:18). Shalem in Hebrew (שָׁלֵם) means ‘peace’. Christ is linked to Melchizedek in Hebrews 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:1-17.

**Romans 5:1** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

**Romans 15:13** Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 15:33** Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

**Romans 16:20** The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

**Ephesians 6:23-24** 23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.

**Philippians 4:9** The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

In 1953, the evangelist Billy Graham published a book titled “Peace With God”. This book was published after WWII ended in 1945 and during the Cold War with the Communist U.S.S.R. The Preface sets the stage for the book. Here is one sentence of the Preface.

*“I am convinced that there is a great hunger of mind and thirst of soul on the part of the average man for peace with God”.*

We close with these words from Scripture. . .

**1 Peter 1:2** according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

**2 John 1:3** Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

**AMEN**