**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**Paul’s Farewell to the Saints in Colossae**

 ***Colossians 4:1-18***

 **December 11th, In the Year of Our Lord 2022**

 **Pastor Matthew Diehl**

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

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

When we read Colossians 4, it is worthy to note that Paul names ten people with whom he is interacting. This shows the spread of Paul’s work that he was commissioned to do by the Lord. Even while in house arrest in Rome waiting for his trail before Caesar, we can see the spread of the Gospel.

**Names**: Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Justice, Epaphras, Luke, Demas, Nympha, Archippus

**Main Topics**: Justice and Fairness, Prayer, Conduct, Greeting and Salutations.

**Colossians 4 Text**

**Justice and Fairness**

**1** Masters, grant to your slaves, justice and fairness,

knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

We read Colossians 3 regarding guidance for slaves, and, in chapter 4, we read Paul giving guidance to Masters to treat those that are in their charge with justice and fairness. Paul reminds them that their Master is in heaven, in reference to God. Again, God did not intend for people to be slaves but provides guidance in the affairs of fallen people. And remember that the reference to a person who is a slave in the New Testament mostly describes a person who is an “indentured servant”. These people agree to be slaves to pay a debt (debt bondage). The American experience of slavery is called “chattel” slavery where there is not any end to the servitude nor any human rights.

We now read Colossians 4:2 and realize the uniqueness of God in that He desires for us to pray to Him, and we anticipate a guiding response. We need to have spiritual eyes and ears or we will not have an awareness of God’s response. And yes, sometimes there is not any response, but it is the experience of life from which we learn. We also learn from other people’s experiences. It is shocking to read that at one time the sins of God’s people were so great that He told His prophet Jeremiah in 7:16ff “As for you, do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not hear you.” This episode gives us an answer to people who say that they pray but do not see God responding. I mean, if you rob a bank and then pray to God for a clean getaway and get caught. . . what do you expect?

Experiencing life in a fallen world molds us closer to the image of God to do His will. Jesus prayed to be relieved from going to the Cross (Luke 22:42), but we know that He preferenced His prayer with “not my will, but yours”. Similarly, if I was Paul commissioned to preach the Word all the way to Rome, I would not want to go to Rome as a prisoner like he did. God surely wants me to buy a private jet and fly around the MED. Nothing is too good for the Lord’s servants. However, it is through these hardships that the Gospel spread because the power of the Cross and God at work in us Believers is more powerful than anything fallen humanity can do to us.

**Prayer**

**2** Devote yourselves to **prayer,**

keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;

**3** **praying** at the same time for us as well,

that God will open up to us a door for the word,

so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ,

for which I have also been imprisoned;

**4** that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

 **Colossians 4:2-4** highlights God’s intent for our life of prayer even in challenging times.

 Paul, the converted Pharisee to be an Apostle of the risen Christ, proclaims in this verse that his, and our, communication to God is a devotion of prayer. Notice, we are to be “alert” in making a prayer of thanksgiving and requesting guidance to direct our words. In this case, Paul is a prisoner in Rome who is requesting prayer for himself to say the right words to witness the Gospel of Christ.

 **[At this time in the sermon I broke from the printed text and reported to the church my witnessing opportunity I had at an Islamic Mosque in Houston on Saturday morning. Go to our web site, roundtopchurch.org, to listen to the sermon dated December 11, 2022.**

 **I relied upon Paul’s words in Colossians 4:3-4]**

Obviously, Paul is allowed to write letters during his imprisonment (House Arrest). We know that he wrote at least four letters (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon) during this time (62-62 A.D.). This knowledge of how God’s Holy Spirit was at work in Paul during his imprisonment witnesses to us that we too can continue to be the Lord’s witness through harsh times. We reflect back on Paul’s conversion when he met the risen Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. No doubt, Paul never forgot his commissioning.

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." **Acts 9:15-16**

Paul could have given-up and become mad at God for allowing him to be arrested. But no, impowered by God’s Holy Spirit, Paul takes the opportunity to continue to evangelize to everyone he encounters including his guards and judges. We read in God’s letter to the Philippians when Paul proclaims. . .

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. **Philippians 1:12-14**

 Paul prays for a door to be opened in order for them to speak of the **mystery of Christ**. The name Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew Messiah. He also uses the word “mystery” which conveys a known Greek religious understanding that only through revelation from God can the truth that was previously unknown now be known. Remember, God spoke through his prophets, like Isaiah, seven-hundred years before the Incarnation about the Christ (Messiah: Isaiah 53). This is an example of a revelation that only came from God and like the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension were all a mystery. These events, like Jesus said, can only be understood by those who have eyes and ears to see and hear (Matthew 13:15-16).

**Friberg, Analytical Greek Lexicon**

**Mystery – Greek** μυστήριον, mysterion ου, τό mystery, secret;

**(1)** as a religious technical term in the cults of the Greco-Roman world, a religious secret confided only to the initiated, secret rite, not used in the NT;

**(2)** in the NT; (a) as what can be known only through revelation mediated from God what was not known before (MT 13.11); (b) as a supreme redemptive revelation of God through the gospel of Christ mystery (RO 16.25; EP 3.9); (c) as the hidden meaning of a symbol with metaphorical significance mystery (EP 5.32)

**Gingrich, Greek NT Lexicon (GIN)**

**Mystery - Greek μυστήριον mysterion**

μυστήριον, ου, τό secret, secret teaching, mystery with reference to something previously unknown but now revealed Mk 4:11; Ro 11:25; 1 Cor 2:7; 13:2; 15:51; Eph 3:3f, 9; Col 1:26f; 4:3; Rv 10:7. Secret truths 1 Cor 14:2. Allegorical significance Rv 1:20; 17:7. τὸ τ. εὐσεβείας μ. the Christian religion 1 Ti 3:16. [mystery] [pg 130]

**Conduct of Actions and Speech**

 **In Colossians 4:5,** Paul exerts his Apostleship authority in reminding the Believers to conduct themselves toward people who are not Believers in order that they see and witness the grace of God exhibited in them. Paul adds that their words should be as “salt”. We know that the right amount of salt enhances food and gives a pleasant taste. So too, Christians are to be that pleasant witness but not overbearing. And it is through the grace of God in operation in each Believer that bears the fruit of knowledge in how we are to talk to each person to whom we witness. Therefore. . .

**5** Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders,

making the most of the opportunity.

**6** Let your speech always be with grace,

as though seasoned with salt,

so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

**Paul’s Personal Greetings and Salutations**

In Paul’s last words, he communicated one of the major goals of having his letter delivered by his close companions. That was to detail his imprisoned condition.

**7** As to all my affairs,

Tychicus,

our beloved brother and faithful servant

and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information.

**8** For I have sent him to you for this very purpose,

that you may know about our circumstances

and that he may encourage your hearts;

**9** and with him Onesimus,

our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here.

Notice the descriptive words Paul uses to highlight his fellow workers in Christ. They are “beloved brothers, faithful servants, bond-servants, and beloved”. These are enduring terms. These men had served with Paul during the time of his Roman imprisonment. It is in the words of Christ that we read about visiting a person in prison and their illness. . . 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' (Matthew 25:40).

Remember, Paul’s circumstances and whole situation occurred because he was arrested in Jerusalem, but then he exercised his right as a Roman citizen to appeal his case to Caesar, and it was the Praetorian Guard in charge of Paul’s transportation and confinement (house arrest) that was in his own rented quarters (Acts 28) in Rome. Once Paul was in Rome, he was allowed to call the Jewish leaders to come visit him in chains guarded by a Roman soldier. These Jewish leaders told Paul that they had not received letters from Judea nor had anyone reported anything bad about him to them. Due to this information, we know Paul was released at that time. However, we also know that Paul was eventually arrested again and was martyred in Rome no later than 68 A.D.

We now read more names of those that serve Christ.

**10** Aristarchus,

my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings;

and also Barnabas's cousin Mark

(about whom you received instructions;

if he comes to you, welcome him);

**11** and also Jesus who is called Justus;

these are the only fellow workers

for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision,

and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.

**12** Epaphras,

who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ,

sends you his greetings,

always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers,

that you may stand perfect and fully assured

in all the will of God.

13 For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you

and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

**14** Luke,

the beloved physician, sends you his greetings,

and also Demas.

**15** Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea

 and also Nympha and the church that is in her house.

**16** 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.

**17** Say to Archippus,

"Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

**18** **I, Paul**, write this greeting with my own hand.

Remember my imprisonment.

Grace be with you.

**Amen**