

HOPE FOR LIVING

(ROMANS 5)

I am so glad to be here at Osaka International Church (O.I.C.) and to see your faithfulness to follow Jesus by gathering with each other on Sunday after COVID laws permitted. It's been seventeen years since we visited O.I.C. during a visit to Japan. I pray that my message today, *Hope For Living*, will encourage your HOPE as you live for Jesus in this world.

In the Bible the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans is the fountain head for all solid Christian Theology. Theology sounds to some people like something only for scholars; but, the Greek word "theology" means "knowledge of God." There is nothing boring nor more rewarding than "knowing God" both in our heads, i.e., "knowledge," and in our hearts experientially, "knowing Him in personal relationship," as the Lord Jesus said *This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.* (John 17:3)

My text is **Romans 5: 1-11 (* displayed in the overhead *)** where the Apostle Paul gives detailed explanations why Christians can have *hope*. **Let's read it together.** Webster's Dictionary defines two *hopes* : The first is a strong desire with expectation, a longing. The second is similar but includes a belief or trust that what is longed for **will come to pass**. The second *hope is Biblical hope*. Hope is a sister to faith, but by definition, implies more regarding our emotions. *Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1 KJV) I think we all know that people cannot live without hope!

Romans 5.1. *Therefore having been justified by faith , we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* A born again Christian has been justified by his faith in Christ who paid the debt of sin for him by His death on the Cross about 2,000 years ago. What is the "Therefore", there for?to point back to Paul's previous statement in (Romans 4:24 - 25 AAT) ---*We are to be counted righteous if we believe in Him who raised from the dead our Lord Jesus, who was handed over to die for our sins and was raised to make us righteous.* When any sinner, no matter how vile, accepts Jesus' substitution for the penalty he deserved, God declares that person righteous, by faith. The sinner is thus justified. Justified, a legal term, is the believer's new position before God's Legal Court, so to speak. God has declared that sinner "not guilty" , therefore, no longer a "sinner", but a holy one or "saint."

When a born-again Christian, such as a preacher, declares to a public group, such as in church, "**I am a sinner!**" he misrepresents God's Holy Bible, and waters-down the high position Jesus bought for us Christians by His sacrifice. Although this is often an attempt motivated by love of sinners to let them feel at home, **the Bible defines** "sinners" as enemies to God. "Sinners" live in sin ..it's their home. **Christians must never feel at home "with sin;" but they can and must feel love for sinners!** What we have, **justification**,....they don't have, yet. And why should they want it, if we don't declare we have it?.... And, how wonderful it is? We rejoice as forgiven "sinners" and declare our joy for what we have , this HOPE for eternity. We live in Christ, our home! Here and Forever in Heaven. Yes , we must make it very clear that what we have and what we are is the Gift from God , "**holiness**," because God declared us not guilty. This is the most wonderful Gift in the whole Universe! . a relationship with

Jesus filled with HOPE by the Holy Spirit. As forgiven “sinners” we must never refer to ourselves as “sinners,” but as Christians.

Also a Christian must not take lightly any sin **after the indwelling Holy Spirit shows it to him**. God's patience is our salvation ; but, as I mention again in this message, why would we keep sinning willfully when it threatens a fervent loving relationship with our Heavenly Spouse, Jesus, the One who has the nail prints in His body to buy our forgiveness with God, His Holy Father?

Paul now goes on to explain how this act of justification by God should become apparent in a Christian's life. The first being **Peace with God**. Formerly the guilty “sinner” before a Holy Judge, now, set free from Judgement. But even more this *peace* becomes an experience deep inside Christians. This peace is thus also a *feeling* Christians experience knowing they have been reconciled to God.

Now, as we follow Jesus, we learn that we don't always have this wonderful **feeling** of **Peace with God** even when we know we have Biblical HOPE. Some Christians may today be asking themselves “**Where did my peace with God go?**”

This lack of **sensing** the Peace of Christ shakes our confidence in the HOPE we have in Christ. I have four possible answers for you, my fellow Saints:

Father's Timing - There may be a sin that you have been holding onto, probably without realizing it. God often waits many years after we are born again by faith in Jesus, to convince us of some besetting sin, or habit, that we didn't realize when we accepted Christ. At that time we confessed that we were sinners, and desperate for the Savior. He knows how much *tough love* that we can take at a time, like a loving human father. He will make this clear to you in His time.

Inner WAR - It also may be your *contrary nature*. That's right! The Bible says that all Christians still have in their hearts a part contrary to God. *For the cravings of the lower nature are just the opposite of the Spirit, and the cravings of the Spirit are just the opposite of the lower nature; these two are opposed to each other...* (Galatians 5:17 WWM) We still have the old nature that although it was nailed to the Cross with Jesus, yet is , at times, still too much alive in our desires, operating against the Holy Spirit within us. This is not *willful sin* , but it could lead to that. So in order to mature, we must ask the Holy Spirit to win!!! Yes, win over our old or lower nature still within us.. This is our spiritual lower nature, translated as flesh in many Bible translations, e.g., KJV, NAS, AAT. It is true that our physical desires relate to our temporary homes, our bodies, before we receive Heavenly Bodies. But don't accept *gnostic religions that lie* that the physical flesh is evil. God gives us *sensory pleasures in life as gifts from our loving Father in Heaven*. The problem is our hearts telling Him, controlling His choices, to get what we want and when we want it in order to please our lower nature without confiding with Jesus, or staying obedient to His Word.

Outer WAR - Peace with God means WAR with the Devil. That is to say, the moment when we who were enemies of God were made His friends through the death of His Son (Romans 5:10) we joined God's Army. Therefore we made an enemy of our previous *lord* in the spirit world, Satan. I recall my first encounter with a demon possessed man as I entered the church in Boston. I tried to love him by inviting him to church. Well, I was a *babe in Christ*...maybe only weeks since my conversion from Satanic astrology to Sainthood in Christ. But *Love Never Fails* as the Bible says in (1 Cor 13: 8) and in this case for me, I had recently read in (Acts 19.14-15)of the *Seven Sons of Sceva* , Jewish men who were not Christians. A demon possessed man gave a terrible beating to the *Sons of Sceva* in a fight,

after the demon had said: *I recognize Jesus and I know about Paul, but who are you?* In Boston , after I spoke to the demon possessed man, I saw a pitiful sight as the demon forced the man away from me, and down the street. Then **it said: “ I know you!”** This was not a human voice..even as a baby Christian I discerned this clearly. Then Jesus' Spirit reminded me of this Bible passage about the *Sons of Sceva*, and I prayed for the man. But I always feel bad that I didn't have faith to cast the demon out of him, yet,at the same time, so thankful for my deliverance from the Devil's control. Thus God was encouraging my newly found faith that I really had crossed over from darkness into light, from Satan into Jesus. Christian, be encouraged that God knows your name, and that the Devil knows it too! Yes, the Devil knows all Christians' names. “We are foolish to expect to serve God without opposition:” said C.H. Spurgeon. We need not fear the battle, for – *Greater is the One that is in you, than the one that is in the world.* (1 John 4:4 M&M).

“This is a TEST” - I recall when we lived in Missouri that the Civil Defense would frequently interrupt both radio and television at the same time with a very annoying buzzing pulsating sound. After about a minute, you would hear: “This was *only* a test by your Civil Defense.” What a relief! The reason became obvious in the Spring when many thunderstorms created tornadoes. Sometimes God decides to take away our *warm cuddly feelings of His Presence* to test us. Will we hold onto HOPE..hold onto Jesus? God, of course, has a right to test His children as the Bible tells us in (1 Corinthians 6:20) “... that *you are not our own? For you have been bought with a price*” ...the Blood Sacrifice of His Son. There is nothing punitive in this. It was not initiated by God because of any sin. George Keith, the songwriter of the hymn, *How Firm A Foundation*, must have had a few tests in his life. He attributed to God gloriously beautiful words for our testing:

*“When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie
My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply
The flames shall not hurt thee, I only design,
thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine*

When one spring a tornado took part of our roof off, as we were taking shelter in a closet, we were thankful that we had been prepared by *tests*. God loves us so much. He looks ahead and sees us already perfected like His Son, and in Heaven. If there were any easier way for us to really learn HOPE..to stay on the path being conformed to the image of His Son....He would do it.

In all four cases: We need to learn to trust our position in Christ, in God our Father's undeserved favor, when we don't *feel* the peace of Christ. Prayer is the Victory!

Romans 5.2 *through whom* (our Lord Jesus Christ) *we have also obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand*; Christians are saved by grace (God's undeserved favor) and they keep standing and thus living by the same source and gift, grace.

This inspires Christians

We exult in hope of the glory of God. Exult – a triumphant rejoicing in confidence in Jesus who promised us nothing less than fully experiencing the Glory of God when we leave our earthen bodies. Our bright future, which all men have lost , *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23) we have gained through faith in Jesus. **My fellow Christians at O.I.C., we have this hope for a glorious entrance into Heaven!**

Romans 5:3 *not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations*; Because our future hope, not yet seen , was secured completely by God, and not our works, our exulting in tribulations is simply confessing the same truth in our life on earth. Our tribulations and afflictions humble us to not have confidence in ourselves, but only in Jesus. Learning this fact of Christian life , confidence in Jesus , leads to changes inside us •

Romans 5: 3b-4 *knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character, and proven character, hope*; Christainity is a religion that is active beyond life on earth and time itself, as God is over time! Every Christian partakes in some of this as the Holy Spirit encourages him for their glorious eternity. God's wise balance of *hope* for Heaven and yet *experiences* includes tribulations and afflictions on Earth. Every day a Christian lives, in affliction or more pleasant times, he still has peace because of the promise, *hope*, that he is one day closer to seeing and being with Jesus forever. Thus Christianity is so much about *eschatology*, or End Times. We need not shrink back at this Earth being destroyed by God : *the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.*(2 Peter 3:10) We are safe in Christ with or without either our breath or this Earth under our feet. God works this attitude of **confidence** into our lives with tribulations in His wise plan for us.

I like this quote from C.K. Barrett : “...tried character is not simply moral worth. • Testing and approving are clearly in mind here (Romans 5: 4); and it is God who is the judge, and vouches for the tried character of the man who patiently endures affliction (or tribulations NAS)..... . When God's approval is thus given there is room for HOPE, not because the man of tried character is a strong and trustworthy person but because in his endurance he has learnt to not look to himself but to God.”
(CKB)

I have prayed for any Christians here experiencing difficult afflictions or tribulations that Holy Spirit will cause Jesus' *peace* to overshadow you. It's easier for me to preach this, than for you, to live it!

Romans 5: 5a *and our hope is not one that could put us to shame* (CKB) Our hope, confidence not yet seen, of seeing the Glory of God will not disappoint us. We will not have to bear the shame of following a false hope. How can we be sure of this?

Romans 5:5b *Because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.* Every true believer in Jesus has the seal of the Holy Spirit within them. This is a key part of **Experiential Christianity**, not how great was the feeling, but **you knew something new has happened**, as it were, **God has begun a new work in me!** Thus, Paul is tying together the perseverance through tribulations with the Third Person of the Trinity, Holy Spirit. **All Believers have the Holy Spirit inside of them. The Bible calls it the Seal of the Spirit as the down payment or guarantee for Heaven. Later in this message I use the analogy that the Holy Spirit is Jesus' wedding ring to all Believers as His Bride.** This is vital, for we Christians learn in tribulations that we need the Holy Spirit , the Helper, for us to have God carry us through. Knowing it is Christ within you, whether with The Spirit's still small quiet voice, or a special sense of Jesus' Presence..**it's that we know it is not ourselves but God Himself by His Spirit, that keeps us *keepin on!***

Romans 5:6 *For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.* When Jesus went to the Cross, He did it for each of us personally. God who is over time, saw each of us in our *ungodly helpless* condition, with no ability to help ourselves.

Romans 5:7 *For one will hardly die for a righteous man. ; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.* "First responders" like firemen, policemen , or ambulance caretakers often put their lives in danger and many times give their lives. But they don't know how "good" or how "bad" are these people they are helping. "First responders" are committed to a "good cause" to protect society. But God , knows each man's evil heart, we were all "bad", and yet...

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* (KJV) This powerfully shows God's conscious commitment to love the most unloveable..that's really all of us since we were all sinners. Again, this Bible passage shows how it is such an impossible statement for a Christian to say "I am a sinner." You cannot be both a "sinner" and a "Christian." The Bible says **yet, in the King James Version, and still, in the New American Standard.** Either word means a past standing, as a sinner. All men in the whole Universe fall into one of these two camps. Christians, are by this definition, "previously sinners." Only unforgiven people are still "sinners"...yet, that was our standing when Christ died for us. The manifestation of God's love is by an historical event, 2000 years ago; the application of it is by Holy Spirit today.

Romans 5:9 *Much more then, having been justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.* God's act of Justification produces conclusions : in (Romans 5:1) – **Already**, we have peace --**Not Yet**, we shall be saved from God's final judgment for sin. Jesus promised *Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment* (John 5:24 NAS). Jesus said that to sinners before His Sacrifice for their sins. But believing that He was God's Messiah kept their hearts open for the Holy Spirit to complete their being born again after His resurrection. Now, Paul is solidifying this Promise for those who have not seen Jesus on Earth, but believe.

Romans 5:10 *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* It's important to realize that "reconciled" means the same for us Christians as "justified." The emphasis is more clear by this analogy: Justified- we were guilty criminals before a righteous judge. Reconciled- we were men acting as rebels against God our King. Thus Christians have been justified , after breaking God's Laws, and reconciled, after rebelling against His Lordship. They will finally be saved when God brings History to a close. **So we Christians stand between two solid supports in the bridge of Life: our Re-birth into God's Family; and being gathered with all of God's family at the End of Time.** So, now , you may ask , how should we then live as we cross this bridge? Well we live in HOPE and don't **neglect** our relationship with Jesus who paid for it all.

I heard someone say that many Christians cross this bridge of life like the rope bridges in the jungle, sagging in the middle. Well, we don't want that Church! Right?

To describe how we should live, I like the description of the Church as the Bride of Christ. The Church is the whole sum of all true Believers. This analogy helps us know how to live as individuals. Jesus is the *spouse* of each Christian. The seal of the Holy Spirit is like a wedding ring showing His love and

commitment to us. We respond with love and commitment to Him and His continuing work on Earth for His Bride by the Holy Spirit. Our love for Him often is weak, but His love for His Bride never falters. We have the Holy Spirit to give us power and wisdom to not sin and to not have other lovers. Participating or believing in other religions is being an adulterer, or a prostitute to your Faithful Husband - Jesus. The Bible teaches this analogy in (Ephesians 5: 31-32 , Genesis 2:24 AAT) *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and live with his wife, and the two will be one flesh. There is a great truth hidden here- I mean that of Christ and His Church.* Union is Holy in Marriage and stated as the best analogy of Christ's union with His Bride, the Church. Therefore, participating in, or going after any religion or philosophy which is contrary to Christainity: e.g., Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Tribal Religions, is clearly committing adultery against your spouse, Jesus. Our responses to Jesus' love , at The Cross, and His on-going care, is what makes our relationship with Christ grow closer over time much like in human marriage. We might not do a perfect job, but we have the grace to not **neglect** the relationship.

The Holy Spirit that God gave us is daily regiven and works to revive HOPE in our hearts to live as Christains. He also directs our paths as God did for the Old Testament Believers in the Lord GOD of Israel. David had a strong sense of eternity, as he often wrote prophetically. In one of David's psalms : *You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into Glory (Psalm 73:24)*. David had a grasp of this hope that the Apostle Paul marked out in detail for us Christians in (Romans 5:9-10 WWMS): *Saved from God's wrath • by His death, and also finally saved through His new life.* Jesus lives today, resurrected from the grave and is forever for us. So, we have HOPE for a future free from God's anger and continuing as Jesus will bring us home to Glory in Heaven.

Church, we have a HOPE that death itself cannot kill! Can you believe it?

Maybe you have not yet received this HOPE BECAUSE YOU HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED JESUS....

May I sing part of this old hymn to you all?

*Jesus to Calvary did go
His love for sinners to show
What He did there
Brought HOPE from despair
Oh how He loves you
Oh how He loves me
Oh how He loves you and me*

You can search all around the world for answers to your life. The world offers so many promises for you ...fulfillment in business...success in whatever you endeavor....But **ONLY GOD HAS THE POWER THROUGH JESUS TO CREATE HOPE IN THE MIDST OF TOTAL DESPAIR. IF YOU HAVEN'T YET COME TO JESUS, RECEIVE HIM NOW FOR HE HAS ALL THE POWER YOU NEED FOR A LIFE FILLED WITH HOPE!**

Let us pray. Dear Jesus, I ask that You give the Father more Glory- by the Holy Spirit's raising HOPE in your followers here today who you love,and opening hearts to receive you, the Light of the World ,..... in those you love and died for yet who are still lost in this world of darkness .

In Your Wonderful Name..the Name of Jesus, I PRAY.

All Scripture is NAS- New American Standard *unless noted otherwise*: CKB - C.K. Barrett , A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, M&M – Greek/English New Testament, Mounce & Mounce, AAT- An American Translation/ Beck, NIV – New International Version