

2023/10/29

Followers of Jesus' High Calling

GOOD MORNING OIC.

OIC..Osaka INTERNATIONAL Church. Your pastor is filled with joy as I preach to so many *faces of the world* here this morning. You, nor I, are not yet *perfected* as we will be in Heaven; but, to me, when I look at you I seem to see *every tribe and culture group*. As the Bible prophecies to us in (Revelation 7.9/Mounce): *After this I looked, and behold, a vast multitude that no one could count, people from every nation, tribe, cultural group, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ...*Your pastor's desire is to work with Holy Spirit as we all together become more like our single Master, the Lord Jesus, but each of us maintain our culture group except as it opposes Jesus' LORDSHIP. A more accurate title for us may be, and I don't propose a change, **Osaka Intercultural Church**.

Now onto this next part of Paul's Letter to the Romans He now makes clear the Specific Guilt of the Jew without Jesus. He rather sarcastically points out the Jew who is leaning on his own righteous obedience to the Law , is actually a hypocrite.

R.17 The Apostle Paul confirms the correct title or identification of his imagined opponent, representing much of the a Jews' arguments against their Messiah Jesus:

- 1) *a Jew* In my experience in sharing Christ, only Jews claim their title ,”a Jew”, as a hard fast reason not to listen to me. Others may simply say no.
- 2) *...rest in the Law* Paul has already declared that no one can achieve perfect obedience to the Law from a pure heart , so no safe rest in this.
- 3) *...boast in God* Paul has shown, and will repeat how God has called the Jews boasting in Him empty words without actions in (Romans 2.24) .(below)

reading v.18 *You know His will and approve the things that are more excellent, because you are instructed in the law.* Paul continues in the same line of the Jews self-assessment but begins to reverse the praises to the conviction of sins by a hypocrite:

In v.18 the conviction in the words, “*You know His (God's)will or what he wants (NLT)...*” is erasing any excuse for ungodliness because of ignorance for the Jew claiming God's Law. As it says in (James 4.17/MEV): *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, it is sin.*

19 *You are confident that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes, {and you} have the full content of knowledge and truth in the law.*

Confidence is a powerful gift in the heart of a true Believer in Jesus. A Believer's confidence rests on God's WORD and the personal Acts of the HOLY SPRIT in a Believers life as they *live by faith*. Paul knew that confidence of the Jew in v.19 is without Christ thus a **false confidence in the sinful self or the devil**.

Paul realized a Jew claiming to be *Instructing the foolish* had Biblical grounds in (Psalms 14.1) *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds.* This points back to the pagan religious person who worshiped animals or statues, not God. As Paul noted in **Romans 1.3** *They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things.* And **Romans 2.1** *That for you who judge (Jews) do the same things.*, that is *in your hearts* as the obviously corrupted pagan does outwardly. Therefore the Jew was being self-righteous knowing there is a God made him able to instruct *fools*! Paul clearly declares again..that, knowing there is One God, is not enough for right standing with Him! Similarly, as a *Teacher of babes (the immature /NLT)*, demands an answer to what do you teach them? As Jesus had showed the Pharisaic Jews were “evangelistic” in the sense of outreach to proselytize in (Matthew 23.15 AKJV):

*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the **child of hell** than yourselves.*

Next, the question is posed to one who claims to *have the full content of knowledge and truth in the law* (v.20), *WHY DON'T YOU LIVE IT, THAT IS, TEACH YOURSELVES?*(v.21) The following list of the sins of devout Pharisees and Jews had to have been Paul's by personal experience as having been one. He knew first hand their behaviors, including: *stealing, adultery, robbing temples* (*It's safe to assume to own valuable idols*) in **(v.21)**.

R.v.23 The Jew boasting to the world around him that he knew the Law. But the world could see that they broke it. This in effect is *slandering the Law and thus* slandering God, which is blasphemy.

Thus, v.24 - *As it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."* The words “*As it is written*” according to the **NIV Study Bible (NIVS)**, is clear in a quote from (Isaiah 52.5)

Now therefore, what do I have here, says the Lord, seeing that My people have been taken away for nothing? Those who rule over them make them wail, says the Lord, and My name is continually blasphemed all day long. “This refers to the way Israel’s exile and oppression by Gentiles have led people to discredit God himself. In an ironic twist, Paul applies it to Jews failing to live up to their covenant obligations” (NIVS)

R. v25-27 Paul starts with a positive idea regarding the physical act or sign, the mark of circumcision in a Jew's body, as an act of obedient commitment to the Covenant of Faith commanded to Abraham for

God's chosen people. Paul knew, and would later in Romans speak profoundly, that Abraham was the **Father of the Faith, not the LAW**. In (Genesis 17.11) God said to Abraham: *You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.*

In (Romans 2.25) Paul says *Circumcision indeed has merit, if you keep the law, ...*But as previously pointed out, not the Jews, nor any other human being, is capable of keeping the Law from the heart, not just forcing oneself to follow a set of rules as Paul had done as a Pharisee before he met Jesus. Now Paul, to make his argument solid to the Jew, states that a Gentile who keeps the Law perfectly is truly circumcised. Paul was not claiming Gentiles would, or even should try to keep the Law, as his theme is always from *faith to faith*. But that having the name Jew, or a physical sign in your body, gives you no advantage over a Gentile regarding having the righteousness of God.

R.v.28- 29

I like this summary of these last two verses in the Believers Bible Commentary(BBC) “ In God’s reckoning, a true **Jew** is not simply a man who has Abraham’s blood flowing in his veins or who has the mark of circumcision in his body. A person may have both these things and be the scum of the earth morally. The Lord is not swayed by external considerations of race or religion; He looks for inward sincerity and purity.”

And Paul declared in (1 Corinthians 2.2) “*For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*” as God's only solution to Mankind's' sin problem. Accepting Christ causes a sinner to become a new creation with inward sincerity and purity.

The revolutionary statement that Paul makes here, and in more detailed later in this Letter to the Romans, is that all Christians are the *new spiritual Jews* , truly a *New Creation*. The Church, the New Testament will make clear, is the new *spiritual Israel, God's Holy Nation* as Peter taught in (1 Peter 2.9) :

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a **holy nation**, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may declare the goodness of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

All the promises of God, except for the existence of a Jewish state (independent of the spiritual values of that state), in the Older and the Newer Testament are only for the Christians, formerly Jew and Gentiles, but all in Christ are new Jews , if you please. Paul's verbally destroying the Jews' claims regarding circumcision makes this his clear conclusion. What God gave as a sign of

a Covenant of Faith, with Abraham , the Father of our Faith; the Jews had made the proof of faith itself. Paul will later in (Romans 3.2) give the Jews the credit due them for faithfully keeping the Holy Scriptures; *Chiefly because the oracles of God were entrusted to them.* But, this does not change their eternal destiny, which is all in living by *faith to faith* in Jesus Christ's sacrifice which buys anyone's forgiveness with God.

As Born-Again Believers we are thus declared by God's Holy Word to be Jews inwardly and because when we have received salvation *by faith in Jesus*, we received circumcised hearts. This is glorious and very humbling. And we err if we allow thoughts of our unworthiness to refuse the praise to us from God as v.29 says :

His praise is not from men, but from God.

This message has many negatives to speak against hypocrisy of Jews without Christ. Although we need to be aware how easily we can be hypocrites in our Christian lives, these passages in Romans illustrate how wonderful a position a Christian has with God. Just to know that *it is possible* for us with all our struggles against our *old nature and the Devil*, for us to receive praises from Almighty God. With such encouragement to us all, I feel led to present a challenge to us all-----applying the Title of this Sermon, **“Followers of Jesus' High Calling”** especially to this close.

But first, I must commend OIC for being instruments of God's Love to all who visit our church. The glorious 49th Anniversary Celebration...simply WOW...it was truly Divine Fellowship with so much loving on everyone. That flow of love last Sunday brings to my mind the Scripture in (1 Corinthians 13.13) *So now abide **faith, hope, and love**, these three. But the greatest of these is **love**.* So after your pastor commends you, what does he do next? He says : Blessings from God to His children causes them to want to give even more away to others. It is not negative to say as Jesus spoke in (Luke 12.48) *For to whom much is given, of him much shall be required. And from him to whom much was entrusted, much will be asked.*

So ,now I ask this question covering the last three sermons from Romans 1 – Romans 2 .29....

How does God's Word in these Sermons from Romans effect our living from *faith to faith* here at OIC?

God asks us in love to be and to do, in Christ, by the Word and the Spirit , what the Jews failed to do under the Law. This is an all encompassing or “Big Picture View” statement on living. As

you can tell I am about to challenge you holy Believers. I strongly exhort and encourage each of us to remember what the Apostle Paul said as soon as he realized he had been an Enemy to the God he desired to love, by opposing God's Son. In (Acts 9.6) *Trembling and astonished, he said, "Lord, what will You have me do?"* Until we humble ourselves at Jesus feet, and ask this , our lives will be filled with indecision and doubt. Even when we sincerely ask, God in His infinite patience , may often teach us to listen for Jesus' answer over many years....but He will **always** answer this question.

About two years ago I decided to prepare how to share in Japan the Good News of Jesus dying for our sins , praying God would somehow and *some day* bring us back to Japan. I believed a simple *seed planting* Bible verse was needed as 1) I could memorize one verse in Japanese, and 2) non-Christians often listen with a short time of attention and need something straight to the heart with as few words as possible. I also realized I should try out this strategy for outreach of *seed planting* where I lived, in and around the Metro-Boston Massachusetts , USA area.

I believe that Holy Spirit impressed me to use **1 Peter 3.18, *For Christ died for sins, once for all. The righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God.*** This began one of the most awesome experiences of my life.

At first, even this preacher and *talk-aholic* was nervous. Then Holy Spirit prompts became overpowering with some folks, as I made sure as I walked by strangers to look them straight in the eye. Yes, I know Japanese don't like that. But that is Holy Spirit's job, **to overpower the sinner's resistance. Are we willing to Believe that He will do His Job if we do ours?** This must happen in all cultures for any sinner to get saved. **We will save few souls for Christ if we continue to bow our knee to the Devil's snare in this society, avoid contact.** Many Americans in my big city, Boston, don't like it either. But, God showed up many, many times to allow my sharing Jesus' Gospel.

Some listeners walk away with an "I am all set!" comment to reject Christ. The Lord didn't want me to be uptight, so He often let me sense the Spirit if I could have some small talk chat first. This is something I naturally do anyhow. I knew I would miss that gifting here in Japan, for it requires a fluidity in the language. But, Osaka cannot wait for me!!! So I call upon you.

One of the most powerful of these meetings was on the telephone on the Saturday before I preached here at OIC on October 1st . I had to check out a financial matter since traveling gave little time for such things. In this conversation I expressed my frustration that I could not sign onto my credit card account at Capital One since I only have a Japanese cell phone. I found myself arguing with a customer service person. The Spirit calmed me to realize he was limited by the computer

system. God made my attitude change instantly as I offered to share a Bible Verse. YES! I shared (1 Peter 3.18) and he got excited and even told me, **“This conversation is recorded but I must tell you my joy to meet a Christian *not ashamed of the Gospel!*”**

This brother was taking a real risk for Jesus to encourage me to share the Gospel. He went further when I told him I was nervous to preach here in person in Osaka for the first time since last December. God knew on October 1st that I would preach the very Scripture this customer service man gave to me: “Not Ashamed of the Gospel.”

Well, this brings me to challenge you! *With such a coincidence or providence for my sermon I feel Jesus was challenging us all by that Capital One customer service man risking his job.* Will you risk something to say with that Customer Service worker and with the Apostle Paul *“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew and then to the Gentile.”*(Romans 1.16/NIV)?

NOW..Let us pray....

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