

SERMON

Justification: Friends of God

Good Morning OIC.

Paul has been giving many explanations and teachings in the Book of Romans to define the position of safety which a Christian has received. He has received this safety when he believed in Jesus Christ's Atonement or Blood Sacrifice to buy forgiveness. Now, Paul expounds or exposes the results of Justification as a Believer lives his life, not anymore as a sinner but as a justified saint; but, even more so, also, a *Friend of God*.

R.Rom 5.11 Jesus said in (John 15.15) *I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.* Now we have not experienced hearing personally everything the Father told Jesus; but everything told to the original Apostles has been told to us in the Christian Bible. And, even more than they were told. Holy Spirit has breathed into the Christian Bible the Newer Testament even the Book of Revelations, or, **Apokalypsis** which in Greek means, **Book of the End of Time.**

Many new believers in Christ experience much wonder. The Oxford English Dictionary (OXF) defines wonder as : **a feeling of amazement¹ and admiration, caused by something beautiful, remarkable, or Similar: awe, fascination, astonishment.** Being *full of wonder, or wonderful* describes their new relationship with God through Jesus. Jesus also said in (Matthew 11.27) "*My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*"

TAKEAWAY#1

That wonder of first becoming a Born-Again Christian need never fade. But, if it does, following Jesus will have new experiences from The Word and the Spirit to cause new wonder in our relationship with God. Following Jesus is never a life of boredom, I can say from the Bible, my life, and my Christian friends.

Adam and Christ Contrasted

v.12 *When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.*

The Bible states the entrance of Sin and Death into the world in (Gen 2.16-17) : **16** *But the LORD God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— 17 except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die."* Adam and Eve both ate of that Tree in direct and willful disobedience to God.

I should explain, as you may have noticed, how God in the Older Testament is often called the LORD GOD. The Hebrew language usually wrote *God's name as Yahweh Elohim, or LORD GOD*. Jesus the first one to reveal God completely to men, said in (John 10.30) ***The Father and I are one.*** {One God}. He taught of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, as He said in (Matthew 28.19) ***Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*** Thus Jesus revealed God as Three Divine Persons : Father , Son, Holy Spirit, yet One God. Therefore Christians started to call God the Blessed Trinity. Most modern Bibles translate the Older Testament literal Hebrew, ***Yahweh Elohim, as LORD GOD.*** This is the Tri-une GOD who is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Older Testament, and Jesus' Father, or simply **GOD**.

After Eve's particular curses were declared by God, He spoke more curses thus placing these on Adam in (Genesis 3.19 / GNT) .

19 You will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything, until you go back to the soil from which you were formed. You were made from soil, and you will become soil again."

20 Adam named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all human beings.

God had warned Adam of the curse of Death in (Genesis 2.16) **16** *But the LORD God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— 17 except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die."* God's revelations and future messages by His Prophets would make it clear that Death was both physical and spiritual, eternal separation from God. Adam & Eve now felt separated from their Creator and reminded of that spiritual separation by physically being cast out of the Garden. In (Genesis 3.23) **23** *So God expelled them from the*

Garden of Eden and sent them to work the ground, the same dirt out of which they'd been made.

Physical Death had not yet claimed one victim after that Sin came into the world from Adam & Eve's Rebellion. After The Garden, Death became what we call *natural causes*. Remember God's *natural* life for Mankind, before sin, was eternal life starting at this Garden. But now before a man died, God used Death to show mercy to Adam & Eve, both for their physical need and a Promise of His providing a Sacrifice for their spiritual need. God's killing an animal to clothe Adam & Eve declared He had a plan for Mankind's Eternal Life to be bought by the Sacrifice Lamb, Jesus.

21 And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

God's curse on the physical snake or serpent was also prophetic regarding Jesus' sacrifice to crush the head of the spiritual Serpent. It was Satan who had possessed the animal snake in the Garden of Eden. The Bible says: Genesis 3.14. *Then the LORD God said to the snake, "You will be punished for this; you alone of all the animals must bear this curse: From now on you will crawl on your belly, and you will have to eat dust as long as you live. 15 I will make you and the woman hate each other; her offspring and yours will always be enemies. Her offspring will crush your head, and you will bite her offspring's heel."*

I am repeating v. 15 with v.16 because the King James wording captures better the significance of "the Woman's Seed"-----

*15 and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between **thy seed and her seed**; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. 16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. (AKJV)*

The usually natural hate of snakes may be more common in women than in men, but this is God's Promise that the *Woman's Seed*, Jesus Christ born from the Virgin Mary. Women don't naturally have seed, so we remember her conceiving by Holy Spirit.

TAKEAWAY #2

The Bible is our final authority, regardless of worldly wisdom. But the fact that scientists often do seek truth in the natural world, has led to the conclusion that the bone structure of snakes used to have legs. It was NOT EVOLUTION, BUT GOD'S CURSE ON SATAN AND THE ANIMAL HE HAD POSSESSED. Christians must not fear science, nor trust it without seeking answers in the Bible and listening for Holy Spirit confirmation. Most modern societies err seriously in trusting science as "God."

The Apostle Paul was addressing Rome, a major city with Jews and Christians, including the Church. He realized that the Jews knew the Genesis History. He also knew that for years many Gentiles had attended Jewish synagogues seeking God. I expect more people in 55AD were familiar with the Fall of Mankind details from the Holy Scriptures in the Older Testament than in major cities of the world today. I pray that my brief description allows you all to understand Paul's comparing Adam& Eve, Mankind's parents, with Jesus, Mankind's Saviour.

Romans 5. v13 *Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break.*

This is a difficult concept or teaching to understand. I am quoting the summary I like from *The Expositors Bible Commentary* (EBC) “The human race did not have a charge from God similar to that which Adam had and violated. But the very fact that death was regnant {reigned or ruled} during this period is proof that there was sin to account for death, seeing that death is the consequence of sin. The sin in view here was the sin of Adam, which involved all his descendants.”

The Holy Bible is God's Word, whether we understand it or not. The Gospel of Jesus Christ can be understood by a three year old child, even so the main theme of these verses and the whole Bible are taught by Paul in (Romans 5.17, below). Many other truths in the Bible are difficult to understand, nevertheless it is God's WORD...It is TRUTH. The question of what Judgment did the sinful men receive after Death before the Law was given is not clear in Romans.

This seems the correct place in this letter to Rome for us to contemplate or meditate on **what we don't understand in the Bible**. God understands it all as He wrote it. The Scriptural help that I chose is from an historical event in the Older Testament when Abraham argued with the LORD to show mercy to his nephew in Sodom. The LORD visited Abraham with two angels and He told Abraham in (**Gen 18.21**) *I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know.* Abraham realized that the two Angels meant possible total destruction as God's judgment on **Sodom**. He persuaded the LORD, with humility yet with freedom to persuade as friend to friend, to withhold Judgment if God found even ten righteous men. His persuasive argument included (**Genesis 18.25**): *Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?*” Jesus calls us friends, so, like Abraham, we may pray as God's friends. (**Genesis 18.32**) *And the Lord replied, “Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten.”*

TAKEAWAY #3

What we don't understand in the Bible, God understands as He wrote it. In the Older Testament we see how Abraham's persuasive argument included his saying in (Genesis 18.25): *Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?*" Jesus calls us friends, so, like Abraham, we may pray as God's friends. But we must trust God's merciful and just character in that which we don't understand clearly; and accept His final decisions.

A word of warning to all of us in regards to those who died before the Law was given, or died before us, such as our Family members. We should realize our main responsibility is clear. After our death, each of us will stand before Jesus Christ at the Throne of God for our Judgment by Him. No relative will stand next to us to plead our case with God. Christians stand with Jesus now, and will then. Our Eternal Safety is set as we have been justified by *faith*.

v.14 *Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come.* As the Apostle Paul taught the Church at Corinth in (1 Corinthians 15.22) *Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.*

We Christians have a **dual citizenship**: our physical and our spiritual. Our sins are forgiven but because we sinned on Earth, we will die. The nations of our citizenship are: 1) ...one where Death still reigns, planet Earth with King Adam; and 2) Heaven where no one dies with King Jesus. When Death forces us out of our first citizenship on Earth under King Adam's influence, we will graduate to be recognized citizens in Heaven by our King Jesus. Our true King, Jesus, the King of Our Heart, the Lord of our Life, gives us *temporary abundant life with His glory here on Earth; but when we see our King Jesus...the Death of Death and Glory forevermore.*

.14b *Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come.* Adam being a symbol of Christ sounds strange. Paul is saying that Adam, who first sinned, effected all Mankind by his action. Christ, who never sinned, similarly effected all Mankind with His action. Romans 5.15 clarifies the sweeping world wide effect of both Men: **15** *But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ.*

Here in Japan, a nation basically unreached for Christ, we easily forget how many billions of people are already in Heaven having believed in Jesus. They are cheering for us and rooting for our

Victory even as we might cheer for the *Hanshin Tigers* playing baseball. *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up.* In (Hebrews 12.1)

The great difference may be seen mathematically in v.16 *And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that **one man's sin**. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty **of many sins**.*

In Heaven there are Billions of people whose sins have already been forgiven, with more to Go there... From God's **single Gift, Jesus**.

The depth and width of this Justification to make us Friends of God . This is magnified in Paul's eloquent words:

Reading Romans 5.17-18

17 *For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. **18** Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.*

My analogy of two citizen-ships and two Kings fits, that is, {King} Adam, by one sin caused death to rule over many ,{his citizens in sin}. But King Jesus, by one act of Righteousness (His Cross) now rules to bring to His citizens { the Church} *the gift of righteousness, triumph over sin and death, right relationship with God, and new life.* In our right relationship with God, "He calls us friends." So we can recall what the Apostle John wrote in (1 John 1.3) *And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

The correct emphasis for Romans' chapters 5 - 6 is the Glorious fact that God has overcompensated, we might say, for SIN through the GIFT of His Son JESUS. Now Paul reiterates, or summarizes this Glorious Conclusion in

v.19 *Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous*

In v.20 *God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant.* Here Paul wisely is led by Holy Spirit to show the purpose of the Law to convince men of sin. The Law could not save sinners, but it was an instrument to bring people to need a Saviour. Then Paul shows how God responded to a more sinful human race by multiplying His *wonderful grace*, undeserved Favor.

Thus He did not count sins against sinners so that they would have opportunity to believe in Jesus' Gospel.

v. 21 *So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Sin's Power Is Broken

Let us not forget that only believers can “cash in” or “receive the Glorious Blessings” just described from God's wonderful grace. Undeserved Favor ,YES, but unconditional Love (agape, Greek) has conditions of First, accepting the Gift of Faith, and, secondly, making a sincere effort to live to Please God.

Romans 6.1 *Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? 2 Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?* All sin, especially intentional or willful sin, must not be taken lightly by citizens under King Jesus' reign of Grace. Paul previously addressed the oxymoron or warped thinking to give God more glory because of His grace by sinning more. In (Romans 3.7) *“But,” someone might still argue, “how can God condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights his truthfulness and brings him more glory?”* He repeats that error again in (Romans 6.1) *Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace?*

But now, Paul introduces a new concept for correct theology or TRUTH to know God. In (Romans 3.8) Paul had stated the danger of condemnation for those who continue in this error of taking sin, or Satan's lies, lightly: *“The more we sin, the better it is!” Those who say such things deserve to be condemned.* Now Paul brings a new concept, *died to sin*, that aids a Christian's everyday life in the battle against sin.

2 Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Christians can consider or reckon themselves as having died to sin.

This is a great weapon against a Christian's old nature. When it makes noise in our hearts, we need not obey it. The Holy Spirit will enable us to believe we have died to sin, and therefore *how can we { or why should we} continue to live in it.*

Now Paul declares or exposes the importance of water baptism as an ordinance of the Church. It is not just a ritual for it declares to God, to the devil, to the world and most importantly to ourselves

that we chose to accept God's declaring our death with Jesus on His Cross when we submitted to water baptism in His name. (Romans 6.3-4) *3 Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? 4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.* God stands with us with His power when we follow Jesus into death. This is more than death to self, although that is part of the result in being born-again. It is total giving up on ourselves being able to live lives on our own strength worth anything good. We declare our total dependence on His Cross and His now being alive to empower and guide our lives. Refusing Water Baptism communicates something less than TOTAL Commitment to God and the world. Without this a Christian's life becomes spiritually hazy to himself and the world around him. Water Baptism accepts that being joined with Christ in His Death, God works clearly in our lives to join Him in power for new lives here.

A power of the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit who raised Christ from the grave, will keep raising us to a holy life on earth and finally, Home to Heaven with Jesus.

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The Worship Team will sing a traditional Easter Hymn, *He Arose*. Well, everyday is Resurrection Day for Christians because He is alive everyday.

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Let Us Pray

REFERENCES

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EBC - Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): New Testament
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