

Justification: Sons of God

GOOD Morning OIC,

I am continuing in the Book of Romans with the under-girding or foundation theme of Justification by Jesus's sacrificial death on a Cross.

Last week I attempted to bring forth the true meanings from Romans chapters 7 and 8 that carries us along through the valley of despair to the mountain of certain victory. Victory is assured for Christians because they have the very Spirit of the Living God inside their bodies. After noting many Bible verses, for building up a Christian, that are found in last week's exposition of (Romans 7.21-8.4), we see **8.4 which says: so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**

Now the Apostle Paul details what is meant by *walking according to the flesh* versus, or compared to, *according to the Spirit*. The original Greek New Testament word, "peripateo," can mean: 1) the obvious usual "make one's progress" by ones legs. 2) to make due use of opportunities. The Hebrew meanings include: 1) to live; 2) to regulate one's life; 3) to conduct one's life, 4) to pass one's life {pass the time away, for example}.

Of these meanings, I select to emphasize "**to make due of opportunities**" and "**to conduct one's self.**"

Therefore *walking according to the flesh* may be understood as choosing to think and then act on a *fleshly – carnal – sinful desire*. I emphasize the word "choosing" in the light or teaching just covered in much of Romans 7 in particular (Romans 7.21 /AMPC): *that when I want to do what is right and good, evil is ever present with me and I am subject to its insistent demands;* and (Romans 7.20 / AMPC) *Now if I do what I do not desire to do, it is no longer I doing it [it is not myself that acts], but sin [principle] which dwells within me [fixed and operating in my soul].*

TAKEAWAY # 1

When we walk with the Lord as students at Jesus' feet, knowing no fear of condemnation, we can fight and struggle to *mature*. The Victory comes mostly from prayer for Holy Spirit to triumph through us over our are "Old Sin Nature." This FIGHT is an opportunity for growth, or for defeat, depending on our lesser part (less when compared to The Spirit's part) to keep choosing to fight and pray. The Fight itself actually allows us to see a clear

“pathway” to keep on living holy lives, to see we are struggling yet still on the Path-Way to Glory.

We have the power to choose with our mind, but only the Spirit has the power to make that choice stick or persevere in us. We read in (Romans 8.5) *For those who are in accord with the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are in accord with the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* In Accord with the Spirit? Well a Music Director at a church in America used to say: “Being in one accord is all the church squeezing together into that small (by America sizes) popular car made by Honda, *Accord.*” That joke is a good example of Unity in the Church, and Unity of a Christian and the Spirit. For Holy Spirit is not only in a small space with us, He is inside of us! Regretfully, proximity or closeness does not itself mean agreement as we see in this verse (Romans 8.5) *set their minds on the things of the flesh.* There is an Italian expression that I recall from a movie many years ago called “La Dolce Vita.” GOOGLE Search gives this definition:

The phrase means “the sweet life” and is often rendered in English by “the good life” which is not necessarily equivalent, especially if “good” is perceived as having moral implications. “La dolce vita” refers to **beauty, joy and pleasure in everyday experience and is often related to hedonistic pursuits.**

years with Japanese cookies being filled from seaweed to delicious cream fillings. *Minds set on the things of the flesh* is thinking and planning pleasures regardless of God's feelings and Holiness. Hedonistic pursuits are making *pleasurable feelings your “god.”* In America in the 1970's the saying “If it feels good, DO IT!” was more than a saying, but for many, a sinful WAY of life. This is *walking* (v.4) and *in accord with* (v.5) *the flesh and not the Spirit.*

Paul makes it clear that despite *sin within him and us* committing violations of living holy lives, without our conscious consent; all Christians still have a responsibility to set their minds on the *things of the Spirit.*

I believe that it is preferable to **first** understand the big picture of these two *pathways to walk* (pareipeteo) *or to live* rather than to only have a detailed list. Such a list does exist in Paul's letter to the Churches in Galatia.

Galatians 5.19-23

19 *Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, indecent behavior, 20 idolatry, witchcraft, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn*

*you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, **self-control**; against such things there is no law.*

A Note on what I see as a somewhat serious inconsistency in Biblical thinking, misinterpreting the Word of God. Most of the modern Bible translations, compared to King James' Version of 1611 AD, translate the Greek New Testament original Scripture word, ἐγκράτεια (enkrateia), as **self-control**. As I preach about choices for Christians for holiness, I cannot explain why these “modern” translation men composed of groups of Bible scholars, chose **self-control**.

ENKRATEIA has these synonyms, or words of like meaning, in the Greek: self-control, continence, temperance, (**Mounce** Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament).

King James and his scholars chose to translate this same word as **temperance**. My trained musician wife, Dorothy, made this clear to me one day as we were discussing the Bible. Her great reference in thought was *The Well Tempered Clavier* by Johann Sebastian Bach, who lived from 1685 to 1750. This is a collection of musical pieces in all the keys possible on the keyboard of a clavier, an ancestor of the piano. This was using an equal distance in sound between one note to the adjacent note throughout the whole board. Before this masterpiece by Bach, a Born-Again Christian, it was impossible to play equally well in all the keys, because the pitches were not distributed the same in all the keys. In effect, Bach had taught for the first time ever, how to tune a clavier or piano today, to be **well tempered**.

Therefore, the word *temperance* should be applied by Holy Spirit to a person's life, as in a piano, as well controlled behavior. Therefore, Self-Control is rather oxymoronic, makes no sense, as we teach and pray for Holy Spirit Control. Whenever a Christian sees the word self-control, don't believe self is capable of any Fruit of Holy Spirit, especially this fruit. Many non-Christians can exhibit great self-discipline and self-control, without the abiding Holy Spirit.

I am not advocating taking down the banner in front of me today, nor throw out your Bibles; but, when you see or think self-control, know that it must be Spirit Control of self. **Someone else must do the TUNING! The piano cannot tune itself!**

The mind set on the things of the Spirit is a desire for a life like Jesus' Life, characterized by: (Galatians 5.22-23/KJV)

*22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, **temperance**: against such there is no law.*

It is critical and vital and I cannot stress enough that we Christians cannot just decide like a Buddhist Zen practitioner, or an athlete who runs marathons, that we in ourselves just work harder to have the Spirit's fruit. There, of course, is a connection with *earnest or harder prayer*. But we must ask for the Holy Spirit. Since He is in accord with a Believer's desire for a walk close to Jesus, only His power can simply cause good fruit to just happen!

Reading Romans 8.6-8

6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Thus, Paul confirms what I just described that Man alone is helpless and impotent for holiness. In (v.6) Paul is speaking of spiritual, not physical death. Mature Christians find that seasons of warfare can also have many periods of time with Life and Peace. Jesus keeps reminding us on the battlefield, that He is The **Prince of Peace**. (Isaiah 6.9): *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

(Reading Romans 8.9) *However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*

But: This little word in the 1st Century Greek language introduced an opposite direction or exemption from the previous statement.

- 1) Therefore, the eternal “*But!*” for Paul, the Missionary, Pastor-Teacher, Prophet, and Evangelist wanted any unsaved person in his audience or reading to be sure of their salvation.
- 2) All Christians belong to Jesus and therefore have the Holy Spirit.

Reading (Romans 8.10) *If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the {SPIRIT} is alive {IN YOU} because of righteousness.*

Paul refers to the temporal limits on our human bodies. Even a born-again Christian lives inside a body which is spiritually dead from sin. I have added my {parentheseis} for my specific exegesis of this difficult verse. The original New Testament was written in the street language version of Greek. My interpretation is partly influenced by the Greek verse having no verbs but assuming the verb “is”, which is common in the Greek 1st century street language just as the NASB

translated. Thus, I disagree with some translations that assuming a future tense, “bodies will die.” Paul meant that being born-again in God's eyes is already having died. Thus, as Paul said in (Galatians 2.20)

*I have been **crucified with Christ**; and it is no longer I who live, but **Christ** lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

When a Christian is baptized in water, as we saw yesterday with Neo, he considers that he was literally nailed to the Cross with Jesus. We may say this is only an analogy, but in God's mind, it is literal. Thus, Paul's *battle with his old nature* points to considering ourselves dead and the only Person alive in us is the Spirit of Christ. If either a literal or a spiritual way of seeing it, this thought is the only way to keep an attitude that affords or allows Victory by the Spirit of God within us Christians.

Note also in (Romans 8.10) *yet the {SPIRIT} is alive {IN YOU} because of righteousness.* We see upper case or capital lettering in the English translations. The original Greek New Testament was written **in all upper case or capital Greek letters**. The lower case and upper case differences were all added by translators according to their interpretation of the text. So, I agree with the {SPIRIT}, the Holy Spirit, not your spirit as some translations have for v.10. Holy Spirit is in us *because of {imputed} righteousness*, in other words, *righteousness* given to us when we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

(Romans 8.11) *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.* As I have noted above and in previous sermons, in the 1st Century Greek language, the word “but” often earmarked or put a red flag, so to speak, at a change of verbal meaning. *But*, that is reverse spiritual direction for Christians, means:

- 1) Death – no Problem, Christian. God's Resurrection lives inside you.
- 2) Be sure you are a Christian to have these eternal benefits, as (v.12).
- 3) Give Life – only God really knows how often he overrules our naturalness to keep us alive and well. We know we receive miraculous healing in the name of Jesus. But what we don't know is how often the Spirit causes health, destroys infections, or makes our natural protective mechanisms work!

Reading (Romans 8.12) *So then, brothers and sisters, we are under **obligation**, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— 13 for if you are living in accord with the flesh, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

“obligation” - *opheiletēs* - ὀφειλέτης, Mounce's Greek English Dictionary - Concordance has this as: 1)debtor, one who owes 2) is obligated, 3) guilty. These alternate meanings are from usage in the Bible itself. *From this list of Bible References* I have chosen (**Romans 1. 14**) as how Paul intended this word to be translated in (**Romans 8.12**). The fact that he uses it, the word *obligation* in this same Letter to the Church at Rome makes this is a safe interpretation or exegesis.

In (Romans 1.14 / KJV) *I am a debtor (*opheiletēs* | ὀφειλέτης) both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, to the wise as well as to the foolish.*

Paul is telling Christians of his **obligation**, based upon his undeserved gift of salvation. This is an obligation of love, or love slave (doulos/ Greek) that Paul defined in (Romans 16.17), as I preached here on December 10th, 2023. **17** *But thanks be to God that though you were **slaves** of sin, you became **obedient from the heart** to that form of teaching to which you were entrusted,* Born Again Christians know they didn't deserve what they received. They were convinced that they actually *deserved Hell* but received the Gift of Eternal Life, Jesus. Their heart is compelled by God's Love, His Spirit within them, to give to others (Geeks and barbarians) what they received. This *obligation* is not from guilt, for God has removed that with Jesus' shed blood. This *obligation* is not from any unpaid debt, for Jesus paid it all. It is a love for our Lord Jesus that moves us to accept the *obligation to share His burden for the Lost*, and to cooperate with The Spirit in *putting to death the deeds of the body*. The final result, as we move from *faith to faith, and glory to glory*, in this cooperation is eternal life.

Therefore..... at the end of (**Romans 8.13**), *you will live.*

Reading (Romans 8.14) *For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons and daughters of God.*

The awesome and really unthinkable thing especially to a newly reborn Christian is that he will become not only a *child of God*, but actually a *Son of God*. What a thought! Carrying over from (v 13), that previous thought, Paul is saying *You will live as Sons of God as you walk to Glory.*

You may recall how this same Apostle, Paul, used Holy Spirit anointing and his superior training to reach out to a statue-worshipping city, Athens, in his famous cross-cultural sermon in the Book of Acts: (Acts 17.28-29) **28** *for in Him {God} we live and move and exist, as even some of your*

own poets have said, 'For we also are **His descendants.**' 29 Therefore, since we are the descendants of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by human skill and thought. The Contemporary English Version (CEV) has (Acts 7.28/CEV) and he gives us the power to live, to move, and to be who we are. "We are **his children,**" just as some of your poets have said. THIS IS WRONG!

For, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we must not think in error that all men are "children of God!" The original Greek language for the Pagan Athenians was (genon / Greek) or descendants, not children (teknon/Greek), but descendants of God. Genon is in the flesh as God is everyone's Creator. But in the correct Bible translations only Born-Again Christians are called "children of God." (teknon not genon) in the original Greek as in (1 John 3.1) See what great love the Father has given to us, that we should be called **children (teknon) of God**—and so we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Mature Christians must look at their non-Christian friends and think of them as "Children of the Devil" not Children of God. Don't grieve the Holy Spirit by that thinking. Paul poured out his life to love "Children of the Devil." He carefully quoted a Pagan Poet who had it right! Paul didn't directly address them as "Children of the Devil," but trusted Holy Spirit to bring them to Christ, realizing that is what they were!even as we all were! We must do likewise...descendants are still not in the Holy Family.

"But Pastor Bruce, how can I stay humble and think that way?," you may ask. I realize that, and I like to sing to myself the song, *The Comforter Has Come*. I emphasize this to myself from the line, "Though I a child of Hell, Now in Christ's Image Shine, the Comforter has come."

I am calling this----

TAKEAWAY#2

We might say that: All of Romans 8, God's Power for Victory from Justification by Christ's Sacrifice, causes us to be Sons of God. God's Power for LIVING AS SONS OF GOD, is the

Spirit of God inside all Christians. This may be summed up in the song, *The Comforter Has Come*, in the reality of everyday life under the Holy Spirit or Comforter's tuning, or control, and leading us to stay close to Jesus.

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When we walk with the Lord as students at Jesus' feet, knowing no fear of condemnation, we can fight and struggle to *mature*. The Victory comes mostly from prayer for Holy Spirit to triumph through us over our “Old Sin Nature.” This FIGHT is an opportunity for growth, or for defeat, depending on our lesser part (less when compared to The Spirit's part) to keep choosing to fight and pray. The Fight itself actually allows us to see a clear “pathway” to keep to live holy lives, to see we are struggling, yet still on the Path-Way to Glory.

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Let Us Pray:

REFERENCES

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