

## **Justification: Fighting & Freedom in Christ**

**Good Morning OIC.**

**On January 1<sup>st</sup>, the first day of 2024, the LORD shook the earth in much of Japan. There were many quakes and aftershocks so that many prefectures were affected. Therefore, before my scheduled message from Romans, Jesus has given me a few things to share.**

**1. As I preached in Romans 1 a few months ago, God who displays His anger at the sins of all mankind, started the New Year with a display of wrath to Japan. He chose New Years' Day to remind the Japanese that this new year can be full of blessings or anger ....reminding them to seek Him....this may be the last year before Judgment Day for the entire world, including Japan.**

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**The biggest sin of Japan, as in any nation on Earth, is rejecting His Son as the only true way to know Him, *Whom to Know is Life*. God displays His anger out of His heart of Love for sinners ..... a warning **on New Years Day declares an alarm to wake up...this Year...even now.****

**2. Jesus gave me Hebrews 12.25-27 as the Bible verses to challenge, yet to encourage the Saint, and put to fear into the Sinner or lukewarm Christian here at OIC today.**

**Hebrews 12.25 *So see to it that you do not reject Him or refuse to listen to and heed Him Who is speaking [to you now]. For if they [the Israelites] did not escape when they refused to listen and***

*heed Him Who warned and divinely instructed them [here] on earth [revealing with heavenly warnings His will], how much less shall we escape if we reject and turn our backs on Him Who cautions and admonishes [us] from heaven?*

*26 Then [at Mount Sinai] His voice shook the earth, but now He has given a promise: Yet once more I will shake and make tremble not only the earth but also the [starry] heavens. 27 Now this expression, Yet once more, indicates the final removal and transformation of all [that can be] shaken—that is, of that which has been created—in order that what cannot be shaken may remain and continue.*

**3.** We followers of Jesus are “*that what cannot be shaken*” if we keep the Faith. We are *indestructible* because we are born of the Holy Spirit, created and then re-created, Born Again through faith in Jesus. And, in (Romans 8.38-39) *38 For I am persuaded beyond doubt (am sure) that neither death nor life, nor {fallen} angels nor principalities, nor things impending and threatening nor things to come, nor powers, 39 Nor height nor depth, {NOR EARTHQUAKES} nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Dear OIC Saints....we are safe until someone or something can destroy our God and Saviour. His Love never fails.**

**I will place this Introduction to today's messages from the Lord Jesus as TAKEAWAY#1**

**Now**, for my scheduled message from the Book of Romans: Justification: Fighting & Freedom in Christ .

*O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death? This comment in (Romans 7.24) does not sound like the words of a victorious Christian! Does it? Well, these are the words of the Apostle Paul. A man who was born again by seeing the Risen and glorified Lord. As recorded in (Acts 9.3-6) 3 Now as he traveled on, he came near to Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him, 4 And he fell to the ground. Then he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me [harassing, troubling, and molesting Me]? 5 And Saul said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting. It is dangerous and it will turn out badly for you to keep kicking against the goad [to offer vain and perilous resistance].*

**6 Trembling and astonished he asked, Lord, what do You desire me to do?**

And, as I preached in my sermon on December 10, 2023 that all Christians who are willing to submit fully, to the best of their conscious ability, to Jesus are God's Love Slaves:

**Christians are “love slaves” for God with something worth fighting for: A Life on Earth close to Jesus and a Glorious Entrance into Heaven forevermore.** The Apostle Paul *coined or initiated* that expression of relationship with Jesus. For in (Romans 6.22) *But now since you have been set free from sin and have become the **slaves** of God, you have your present reward in holiness and its end is eternal life.* So how could Paul say this seemingly hopeless statement in (Romans 7.24)?

I will attempt to see how he explains this as I exegete or draw out the meaning of the verses of Holy Scripture leading up to this verse.

Reading (Romans 6.23- 7.2) **6.22** *But now since you have been set free from sin and have become the slaves of God, you have your present reward in holiness and its end is eternal life. 23 For the wages which sin pays is death, but the [bountiful] free gift of God is eternal life through (in union with) Jesus Christ our Lord. 7.1 Do you not know, brethren—for I am speaking to men who are acquainted with the Law—that legal claims have power over a person only for as long as he is alive? 2 For [instance] a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is loosed and discharged from the law concerning her husband. 3 Accordingly, she will be held an adulteress if she unites herself to another man while her husband lives. But if her husband dies, the marriage law no longer is binding on her [she is free from that law]; and if she unites herself to another man, she is not an adulteress. 4 Likewise, my brethren, you have undergone death as to the Law through the [crucified] body of Christ, so that now you **may belong to Another, to Him Who was raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.***

**(Romans 6.22-23)** Tells us that Christians are set free from sin, and **its payday check...Death!!!**

In (v.22) Paul also gives us a one line **already and not yet:** *you have your present reward in holiness and its end is eternal life.*

The advantages or rewards of holy living now can be easily forgotten during tests and trials in a Christian's walk to glory, eternal life into Heaven.

Then in (Romans 7.1 ), Paul focuses on the Jewish readers, those acquainted with the Law. He presents the powerful and emotionally charged comparison between Marriage under the Laws of Judaism in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, with Freedom from the Law because we are in Christ. He does this from the perspective or side of a wife. Simply put, death of your husband frees you to enjoy sexual pleasure in a re-marriage. If he is alive, it would be adultery, which is punishable by death in the Older Testament.

In ( Leviticus 20.10) *The man who commits **adultery** with another's wife, even his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.* Paul's words, breathed by Holy Spirit, also dovetail or connect with wages of sin, and wages of adultery.

**(Romans 7.4)** *Likewise, my brethren, you have undergone death as to the Law through the [crucified] body of Christ, so that now you **may belong to Another, to Him Who was raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.*** Brilliantly God's wisdom through Paul connects the dots of this puzzle of Freedom in Christ with the spiritual intensity and mystery of marriage between a man and a woman. A Born Again Jew had been previously married to the Law, and at rebirth, into relationship with his new spouse, Jesus. This Jewish man is not an adulterer with God, who gave the Law, because he has *undergone death as to the Law through the [crucified] body of Christ.* So a Jewish Christian becomes analogously or like a widow who has been set free by her husband's death.

Even more than this, like a widow remarried, believing in Jesus gives a Christian a new husband, in fact, Jesus, united to him or her in the Holy Spirit.

We find in Holy Scripture that God is not shy about one of His most mysterious inventions, the attraction between men and women and the inner desires He created to lead to marriage.

In **(Ephesians 5.30-32)** we see *30 Because we are members (parts) of His body. 31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is very great, but I speak concerning [the relation of] Christ and the church.*

Christians now belong *to Another, to Him Who was raised from the dead.* Thus, Christians are members of Christ's body in a mysterious way as a married couple become one flesh in the consummation of their marriage. Law no longer is the Christian's husband, nor spouse. Knowing we Believers in Jesus are so connected with Him assists our not going back to choosing either sin or the Law to be our Lord and Master.

But, you may ask, what prompted the Apostle's desperate cry for release in (Romans 7.23)?

Let us move on to (Romans 7.5-6) **5** *When we were living in the flesh (mere physical lives), the sinful passions that were awakened and aroused up by [what] the Law [makes sin] were constantly operating in our natural powers (in our bodily organs, in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh), so that we bore fruit for death. 6 But now we are discharged from the Law and have terminated all intercourse with it, having died to what once restrained and held us captive.*

In v. 5 *,the sinful passions that were awakened and aroused up by [what] the Law [makes sin]* . This is like telling a child the big jar on the table is filled with delicious cookies which he is not

allowed to eat. In the child's mind, the jar grows bigger every second. In (v. 6) *Discharged from the Law* and no longer married to it gives Christians freedom from *Living by a set of Rules!* Sadly I must say many Christians make up a new set of “Rules” to replace the “Law.” This is not freedom in Christ. We see this confirmed in (v.6) *So now we serve not under [obedience to] the old code of written regulations, but [under obedience to the promptings] of the Spirit in newness [of life].* A Christian's power to serve God without a set of the “Old” or “New” Rules comes from our *obedience to the promptings of the Spirit. So now we serve not under [obedience to] the old code of written regulations, but [under obedience to the promptings] of the Spirit in newness [of life].*

I will never forget the day a very evangelistic minister whom I had admired took away my respect for him as one of my *teachers or mentors or sensei.*

He shared that at the end of the day he felt he had a good day because he broke none of the Ten Commandments. This is not *FREEDOM IN CHRIST.*

The very Spirit of God lives inside us. Why replace Holy Spirit with either the Law of God or man-made rules. Now, let me make it clear, that developing certain habits of behavior as a Christian is NOT replacing Holy Spirit with RULES. These habits of behavior are formed gradually as we mature in Christ. It is really the indwelling Spirit of God doing it, often without us consciously realizing it. I recall at a Bible College a teacher telling us students: “If you don't develop a Christian philosophy of living, you will get *conned!*” (deceived by convincing talkers). As one of my favorite hymns goes: “His Law is Love, and His Gospel is Peace.”

Reading (Romans 7.7) *What then do we conclude? Is the Law identical with sin? Certainly not! Nevertheless, if it had not been for the Law, I should not have recognized sin or have known its meaning. [For instance] I would not have known about covetousness [would have had no consciousness of sin or sense of guilt] if the Law had not [repeatedly] said, You shall not covet and have an evil desire [for one thing and another].*

God had intended the Law to be like a school bus taking the Jewish Nation children to school over many centuries to reach the school where the Greatest Teacher, TRUTH Himself, was found. That is to Jesus the Messiah. Paul makes it clear that the Law is good, humans are naturally bad. The Law is meant to teach all men their need for the Savior. We cannot do this righteous living thing and keep the Law.

The next verses (v.8-v.11) :

**8** *But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment [to express itself], got a hold on me and aroused and stimulated all kinds of forbidden desires (lust, covetousness). For without the Law sin is dead [the sense of it is inactive and a lifeless thing].*

*9 Once I was alive, but quite apart from and unconscious of the Law. But when the commandment came, sin lived again and I died (was sentenced by the Law to death).*

*10 And the very legal ordinance which was designed and intended to bring life actually proved [to mean to me] death.*

*11 For sin, seizing the opportunity and getting a hold on me [by taking its incentive] from the commandment, beguiled and entrapped and cheated me, and using it [as a weapon], killed me.*

These verses tell us that for a sinner to seek the Saviour, he has to realize the reality of his sin. For the Jew, that would be his failure to keep the Law perfectly. So, the Law (for a Gentile Sinner: knowledge of Right versus Wrong) *using it [as a weapon], killed me.*

The sinner's self-righteousness is so killed. All people need a certain inner sense of worth or goodness. That is because all people are *made in the image of God*. In (Genesis 1.27) *So God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them.* Paul's conviction of his sinfulness as his sinful nature was stronger than the Law, he says sin "killed him." Therefore, we can't blame the Good Law for our sin, as in (v.12) *The Law therefore is holy, and [each] commandment is holy and just and good.*

*13 Did that which is good then prove fatal [bringing death] to me? Certainly not! It was sin, working death in me by using this good thing [as a weapon], in order that through the commandment sin might be shown up clearly to be sin, that the extreme malignity and immeasurable sinfulness of sin might plainly appear.*

Thus, the shocking realization is to a person thinking themselves a "good" person, **that they are not**. The deep feelings that Paul speaks of shows a man how he is like a bad apple "rotten to the core", as the American expression goes. As the Older Testament prophet spoke in (Jeremiah 17.9 / KJ21) *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?* The Amplified Bible words in (Romans 7.13) describing "sin" as "*malignant*," like a cancer in our day and age of medical knowledge. This helps us to realize that sin killed us all, but Praise Be to God, our sin also killed our Loving Saviour! So now we are free from the Law and from Sin for He took our sins onto His Cross.

#### **THE BATTLE OF THE TWO NATURES is now detailed by Paul.**

Now, we start to see where Paul is headed regarding the battle against our old sin nature that has him call himself a *wretched man*. In (Romans 7.4) Paul may be still discussing his battles before Christ, still under the impossible master, the Law. The Law kept him so mindful of his sin nature that he lost any peace of being a Jew, a spiritual child of Father Abraham.

*14 We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am a creature of the flesh [carnal, unspiritual], having been sold into slavery under [the control of] sin.*

*15 For I do not understand my own actions [I am baffled, bewildered]. I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but I do the very thing that I loathe [which my moral instinct condemns].*

Paul's moral instincts, his religious philosophy, was in his mind from the records of the men of faith in the Older Testament: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, King David and the Prophets.

**Reading v.16-17** *Now if I do [habitually] what is contrary to my desire, [that means that] I acknowledge and agree that the Law is good (morally excellent) and that I take sides with it.*

*17 However, it is no longer I who do the deed, but the sin [principle] which is at home in me and has possession of me.* These last two verses clarify that Paul is describing the battle against sin in a born-again Jew, or Gentile, **the Two Natures**. The self-righteous Pharisee **could not even imagine** he had sin inside of him, nor ever require to battle it. He deceived himself that he was keeping the Law, the Ten Commandments and other laws from the Bible. He may have done that in certain parts or partitions of his life. But Jesus called out the Pharisees for keeping the Letter and not the Spirit of the Law. We see this in ( Matthew 23.23)

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you give a tenth of your **mint and dill and cummin**, and have neglected and omitted the weightier (more important) matters of the Law—right and justice and mercy and fidelity. These you ought [particularly] to have done, without neglecting the others.*

The battle we Christians wage against our old nature is further described in the next two verses (Romans 7.17-18)

*17 However, it is no longer I who do the deed, but the sin [principle] which is at home in me and has possession of me.*

*18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it. [I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry it out.]*

It is important that we look at the positive side of this battle. First, and foremost, Christians received a new nature at re-birth. This new nature, was carried into them by the Holy Spirit. This is God's nature,

*For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory. As written in (Colossians 1.27/ NLT)*

Don't be discouraged, dear Christian, that you have this inward battle. For if you did not have a new nature received at Re-Birth in Christ , there would be no battle against the old nature.

In (Galatians 5.17) Paul writes to Christians in Galatia : *For **the desires of the flesh** are opposed to **the [Holy] Spirit**, and **the [desires of the] Spirit** are opposed to **the flesh** (godless human nature); for **these** are antagonistic to each other [continually withstanding and in conflict with each other], so that you are not free but are prevented from doing what you desire to do.*

Pastor Bruce, how can you title this message “Freedom?” You just read a verse of the Bible that says “*so that you are not free!*” With all this battling, how can we agree with the Holy Bible (Galatians 5.1/NIV) *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. **Stand firm**, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

The answer that I just put on myself above is as follows. Yet, as we walk with Jesus, we learn that there is much spiritual work in **Stand firm**. We in ourselves are prone and easily put into *yokes of slavery*. Thus “*so that you are not free*” from having to work out the *Free Gift* of your Salvation! The second part of my answer is best understood by Christians who were demon possessed or in great control by Satan before being born again.

When you look at Christian's Life from that perspective or *point of view*, you see that having the *Freedom to Fight* is truly freedom.

We not only have the freedom to fight, but also the promise to win over our old nature and the devil. The LORD doesn't talk with a *forked tongue*, as that snake – Satan – does, for *Jesus is the Truth*. We desire TOTAL FREEDOM, free from our old nature which keeps sin showing up inside us; and our enemy, Satan. His Word makes it clear that this will occur in seasons here on earth; but not continually until Heaven. Yes, brothers and sisters in Christ, God always points us to live in light of Eternity so that He may cause us to be maturing as we become *Sons Of God*. Thus Paul would write in (Romans 13.11) *Besides this you know what [a critical] hour this is, how it is high time now for you to wake up out of your sleep (rouse to reality). For salvation (final deliverance) is nearer to us now than when we first believed (adhered to, trusted in, and relied on Christ, the Messiah)*. This final deliverance is the permanent and glorious freedom after we leave our sinful bodies.

Realizing now our “position before God,” “our right standing in Christ” as a Christian, helps us to know how free we already are in the midst of spiritual warfare: against our old nature or the devil.

Remember some weeks ago in (Romans 3.14)

*[All] are justified and made upright and **in** right standing with God, freely and gratuitously by His grace (His unmerited favor and **mercy**), through the redemption which is [provided] **in Christ Jesus**,...*

In a world filled with war, too many Christians think fighting and war are a sin. Not when we “*Are On The Lord's Side.*” and our battle is not against flesh and blood, other than our old sinful fleshly desires. How could there be shouts of victory, if there were no battle? Sometimes we Christians have such glorious victories, that we feel, for a time, that we are in Heaven. God has promised us *times of refreshment* even as was promised the Jews who actively crucified Jesus. This was God's



promise in Peter's preaching in (Acts 3.17-19/NASB) : **17** *“And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18 But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;*

#### **TAKEAWAY #2**

**Freedom to Fight** is a real freedom. Paul has taught us in this part of his letter to the church in Rome that having a new nature as a born-again Christian has made us sensitive to our inward battle against our old nature. He is painting this realistic yet negative picture to help us win spiritual victories, not to live in defeat and discouragement. Christians sensing their old nature's power might be deceived by Satan to think that they are not truly born again, in that position of right-standing with God. That position does not depend on us, but on **Justification bought by Jesus' Cross**. By the indwelling Spirit of Christ, we receive times of great refreshment even before obvious victories.

Now , to Review ....

#### **TAKEAWAY#1.**

**On January 1<sup>st</sup>**, the first day of 2024, the LORD shook the earth in much of Japan. There were many quakes and aftershocks so that many prefectures were affected. Therefore, before my scheduled message from Romans, Jesus has given me a few things to share.

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Dear OIC Saints....we are safe until someone or something can destroy our God and Saviour. His Love never fails.

Now, I must break this message into two parts. Next week, Lord Willing, I will continue to exegete and bring out Paul's meaning in calling himself, a man with the joy of Jesus...filled with Holy Spirit...conscience of God the Father...yet, *a wretched man*. I hope that leaving you dear people

hanging in space about this, so to speak, will stir up even more hunger to *feed upon the Living Word of God*.

Now, let's prepare our hearts to celebrate Holy Communion together-

#### REFERENCES

{ } - Pastor Bruce's added notes for clarity

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KJ21 - 21st Century King James Version (KJ21)

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