New American Standard Bible (NASB)

2024/04/28

SERMON: Justification: Leads to Dedicated Service

GOOD Morning OIC,

JUSTIFICATION is the declaration by God that we are no longer guilty but we are made righteous on the basis of Jesus' death on The Cross to buy OUR eternal forgiveness. OUR JUSTIFICATION is according to God's Plan: Before Time Began - In Time - After Time is No More, as revealed in the Bible. In recent months the messages of the Book of Romans tells us we can be confident that before time began, we Christians are "The Chosen." The Book of Romans also declares that God, the Sovereign King of the Universe, has placed salvation of all men in the Word and in also in the hands of His Chosen, the Church. Today, we will see more details of how Paul describes that Christians who are Justified by Faith and who follow Jesus will be lead to Dedicated Service.

In my last message from the Book of Romans I ended with the word phobeo/Greek or fear with meanings in the Bible from "respect," to the fear of making God angry. In the middle of the "spectrum" or "range" is the meaning "awe." Awe is a reverent fear that allows us to still feel and trust God's Love without being conceited over it.

Gentile Christians live in AWE of GOD for grafting them as wild olive branches into the Spiritual Family of Faith, the Faith of Abraham as we learned in (Romans 11. 30) 30 For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

The mercy which Gentiles received because of the disobedience of the Jews gives them a sense of a reverent fear or respect and AWE of God.

The mercy which Jewish Christians received because God kept them in the physical family of Father Abraham, the natural olive tree, caused them to believe in Jesus, their Messiah and Sacrificed Lamb for Israel. Both live in AWE OF GOD! Is not it wonderful how God loves to show mercy to sinful Mankind, Jews and Gentiles, to enter the Spiritual Family of Father Abraham, the Family of God, through Jesus!

Since we are in awe of such **mercy**, from the teaching in (**Romans 11**) Paul starts the next section of his Letter by showing a way to please God.

We read in (Romans 12.1-2) Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

God is asking us to present ourselves to Him as sacrifices. When we are truly in AWE of our God and the Scarifice of His Son, Jesus, we feel honored that God would call us to follow in the Jesus' sacrificial footsteps. Jesus is the One who sacrificed His Life on the Cross for us.

Now, a few words on *sacrifice*. Let us look at the first sacrifice of an animal to God. This was by Adam and Eve's second son, Abel in (Genesis 4.3) So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. 4 Abel, on his part also brought of the first-lings of his flock and of their fat portions.

About 5,000 years after Abel, the next recorded animal sacrifice to the LORD was by Noah. Noah's ark that survived the worldwide Flood, was resting on a mountain, and when Noah saw that the ground was dry; he left his famous vessel. We read in (Genesis 8.18-20) 18 So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. 19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark. Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. It is not unlikely that Noah remembered the godly men in his family tree who kept the history since the Garden of Eden alive in their stories. If so, Noah quickly identified with Abel and did likewise. God accepted Noah's animal sacrifice and was glad that He had given Noah the mercy to continue the Human Race! (Genesis 8.21)

21 The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

Note that Paul knew that we Christians, including himself, need "the mercies of God" to be able to obey this request to be Living Sacrifices. I have a joke a great Bible teacher and pastor told me about (Romans 12.1). It sounds "funny" but has a true and serious meaning to it. Feel free to laugh...and then realize it describes our inconsistent obedience to our wonderful Saviour and God. The joke or play on words is: "The trouble with Living Sacrifices" is that they keep crawling off the altar!" Well, we do. We often look for any easier way out of following Jesus than to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice. But by the mercies of God the Holy Spirit

helps us back onto the Altar. For it is on the Altar that we grow close to Jesus and find the joy of living for Him.

Pastor Bruce, God is asking me to be a sacrifice? YES! The (NASB) translation, "this is your spiritual service of worship," misses the word "reasonable" as an important stress on this verse for my answer of YES. The original Greek Text (Romans 12.1/MOUNCE) I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God—this is a reasonable (logikos) act of worship for you. This Greek word is the root of the English word "logical." YES? We should see our being Living sacrifices as a reasonable request by the God who gave His Son the Sacrifice to save our souls.

TAKEAWAY#1

Living in AWE of the God of all mercy is the basis of "Dedicated Service." This life of AWE frees us to offer ourselves completely to God through Jesus.

Next, Paul writes in (Romans 12.2) 2 And do not be conformed to this world... This sounds simple, but it is definitely not easy. The ruler of this world, the Devil, tries to put pressure on Christian's to be conformed or molded against the mold we are in and constantly receiving as we become Sons of God, that is more like Jesus. Temptations for obvious sins may be aimed at us, but it is usually the everyday weariness of our faithful Walk to Glory that can make us putty in the wrong hands, the world's pressures, and Satan's evil suggestions. Back in the 1970's we young Believers in Jesus sang this short song based on Romans 12.2...

Don't let the world form you into its mold

Until you're tired and weary and about to lose hold

It's your whole way of seeing things that needs changing round

You need God's perspective down here on the ground.

God's perspective or seeing things as He sees things is the next verse in (Romans 12.2b) but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. God causes our minds to be renewed! Our activities to encourage Him to renew our minds include: time alone with Jesus; continuing in prayer while walking through our everyday jobs; and fellowship with Christians. God thus continues His mercy to us. He hasn't changed His desire to keep us in His Hand, and renew us over and over and over....until Glory!

The results are always worth facing the challenge, sooner or later, as in (Romans 12.2b) so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

The Amplified Bible has some powerful descriptive words of amplification that are true to this Bible verse: (Romans 12.2/AMP) And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed and progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you].

AMPLIFIED DESCRIPTIONS include - 1) this world[any longer with its superficial values and customs]. Every society on Earth has superficial values and customs which it calls normal which oppose the WORD and SPIRIT of GOD. I refrain from exhorting or persuading the Japanese people for this sin, as all Christians the world around struggle to know how much their culture they grew up in as children opposes God. But I pray earnestly, that Holy Spirit will show this sin of culture to Japanese, Americans, Germans, Chinese, Africans and many of our tourist visitors here from all around the World today. In the future, you will likely notice my criticizing the American Society mostly because I grew up conformed to the world there, in every area of my evil life! But God didn't give us the Bible to write over it with the writings of our culture, any culture. If we don't make the Bible and the voice of the Holy Spirit the FINAL and ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY in our lives, we shouldn't wonder why Satan often chews on us like a MacDonalds Burger!

AMPLIFIED DESCRIPTIONS include 2)- as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes] As I have preached before, the road to maturity, learning to walk closer to Jesus, includes some discipline as I mentioned above: time alone with Jesus, and continuing prayer while walking through our everyday jobs, and fellowship with Christians. It takes prayer and determination to be [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes]. But with God's help we can do it! As Paul said in (Philippians 4.13) I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. We must never forget that the goal or final destination is Glory in Heaven; but, as we see here in the next verse, there are rewards on earth when we walk close to our Lord.

AMPLIFIED DESCRIPTIONS include 3)- so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you].

There is nothing quite as satisfying, and peaceful as KNOWING GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE IN A PERSONAL WAY! This is truly a taste of God's Glory on Earth. It is always good, acceptable, perfect and will clarify His unique and singular plan for your life. Thus the Bible tells us if we are aimed to Glory in Heaven, that we will also taste God's Glory on Earth.

TAKEAWAY#2

Christians who are willing to present themselves to God as *Living Sacrifices* receive the Glory on Earth of more of His Presence and truly Knowing His Will for them. They experience (Colossians 1.10) so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Next Paul reminds us that we depend on God's mercy to begin our Life in Christ and give each a measure of faith in **(Romans 12.3)** *3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.* Sometimes the Bible seems to contradict itself. Well God cannot really do that. Paul just finished encouraging Christians to find out from God His personal will for them. Now, he reminds the Roman Believers, to be sure that they heard God telling them what gifting and calling He has given them before they get too or overly *confident*. Note how Paul claims God's grace or undeserved favor given to him by God to allow him confidence to correct and to teach true humility to the Saints, *everyone among you*. This Bible verse is difficult for young Christians. But maturity in Christ includes God's causing you to be *confident in Christ* according to God's will, maybe **not yet your will**. This is really a large part of the definition, if you please, of Christian maturity. I have been teaching a series of *Confident Christianty and God's Singular Call* at the Wednesday Bible Studies. I plan to do this for a few months as we are blessed with young Christians eager to learn God's will and calling. You never get too old to keep seeking God's will in your life as well.

The thing implied in (Romans 12.3) not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, is also not to think too lowly of himself either! This is possible by hearing from the WORD and the SPIRIT what measure of faith God has really given to you. Because it is our job to seek Jesus daily and it is God's job to keep your faith growing, we find this a fluid or ever changing but exciting part of the Christian life.

Our Lord Jesus challenged and encouraged His disciples in (Matthew 17.20) And He *said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. Jesus also told how God causes our faith to grow. We can't make our faith grow only by our own will. For Jesus said in (Luke 13.20): 20 And again He said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? 21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened." With leaven in it, the bread "grows." Thus our faith is challenged to grow, to become as "big as a mustard seed," and also, God causes it to grow

often beyond our understanding for many periods of time as we keep the faith. That faith He gave us is the leaven planted in the flour {of our hearts}. God will do more than His share of causing our faith to grow as we keep believing and seeking Jesus and God's will for each our lives. Paul knew that God would fulfill a new or mature Christian's desire to know His will for his life. As time passes in the Christian's walk, each of us will get to know better the details of the "measure" in (Romans 12.3) as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Next, Paul emphasizes the "Team or united attitude" in the Church, the Body of Christ on Earth. (Romans 12.4) 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. All Christians are connected in Christ and thus are together the Body of Christ on Earth now. Only Born Again Christians can have this supernatural "unity." It is not with our family by natural birth, or our community, our nation; but only with brothers and sisters in Christ by supernatural rebirth, believing in Jesus. Again, in (Romans 12.4/AMP) so we, who are many, are [nevertheless just] one body in Christ, and individually [we are] parts one of another [so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; J. Like the human body is connected to function the best, Christians are dependent on each other.

For any local church to bear much fruit for God's Kingdom, there must be a *commitment to that Local Church as one's Home Church*. Fellowship with many Christians around town or around the world will not create a local church that bears fruit for Jesus. Only fellowship in the local church with each memebr realizing and learning that we are [mutually dependent on each other] will create the joy and peace of this dependence. YES...this often means conflict with others. Unless we risk conflict in our Local Church we will not grow as the Local Body of Christ. Our imperfections as Christians are not a surprise to our Lord Jesus. Remember, Dear OIC Saints, that *Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another* in(Proverbs 27.17).

TAKEAWAY#3

Christians who are presenting themselves to God as *Living Sacrifices* will receive courage from God for conflicts with other Christians in the Local Church. One cannot say that they have presented themselves as a *Living Sacrifice to God* who refuse to get involved with the other members of the Body of Christ in their Home Church. *Iron sharpens Iron* means that God will mold more mature and wiser Christians.

Next Paul goes into the Christian exercising or using that faith that God gave each of us.

(Romans 12.6) 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: Now, I am convinced that Christians who have experienced Jesus baptizing them in the Holy Spirit are more open to the more supernatural gifts, yet Jesus taught me personally, that God can decide to lead any Christian to be moved by Holy Spirit to an act of supernatural service for Jesus. I also want to remind us all that God always desires both Holy Spirit Fruit and Holy Spirit Gifts in Jesus' Church. Paul made it clear as he discusses "gifts" that these differ according to the grace given to us. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a second Act of God's Grace, undeserved favor, and, as all gifts from God including Salvation, is not earned in any way at all. But, all gifts, both supernatural and the more understood in our thinking, are from God.

Paul lists some of God's gifts here in (Romans 12.6b-8) 6b if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Prophecy, Rom. 12.6 - requires faith in God's supernatural message coming from a Christians mouth beyond their personal understanding. The Apostle Peter made this clear for the Old Testament prophets in (2 Peter 1.20-21) 20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. New Testament prophets also have the same requirement for this gift. New Testament *prophecy* became common in Church services; but more as a "gift" than a life calling. However, some Christians in the New Testament are called to prophecy often enough that they carry the job titile *Prophet*. We see this in (Acts 11.27-28) 27 Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. {Now note: a true prophet's words will happen, sooner or later}. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. And also in (Acts 21.8-9) 8 On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. Service, Rom. 12.7 - in his serving; In other words, service is not something we talk about, it is something we do. We at OIC are blessed with many Christians here who have this gift. Every time you turn around {American slang} you find them serving someone else or in a new way. **Teaching**, **Rom.** 12.7 – in his teaching; teaching is not something we talk about, it is something we do. We have dedicated teachers here at OIC. It is not just the pastor and Brad. Others faithfully teach Jesus to the OIC children.

Exhorts, Rom. 12.8 - he who exhorts, in his exhortation. What does the word "exhort" mean in the Bible? The Greek New Testament (MOUNCE) has the word parakaleo, for the NASB exhort. The Biblical meaning from the Greek: to call out, to call upon, to beseech, implore, encourage, persuade. The English MOUNCE translation uses "encourage" for parakaleo. I disagree for in common English speaking "encourage" never implies the strong emotional level of "to persuade" such as to flee or run away from sin that The Apostle Paul makes clear in his "exhortations" to his audiences.

Giving, Rom. 12.8 - he who gives, with liberality; All Christians are called to give of themselves and of their finances to the Church, and thus to God. But, the "Gift of Giving" stands out as wonderful and unusual, like all the individual gifts in the Body of the Local Church.

Leading, Rom. 12.8 - he who leads, with diligence; We are a congregational church, and last weeks Annual General Meeting(AGM), showed me the heart of those members who attended. They have a heart to care as they claim OIC as belonging to themselves. It really does. Yet, at the same time, OIC and all of us belong to Christ, the Head of the Church. It is my job as pastor, and secondly, other leaders, {approved by the OIC Council} to lead the church with "diligence," without "lording { authority denying brotherhood of all Christians} over them." The first leader appointed by Jesus to the Church, the Apostle Peter, said it in (1 Peter 5.1-5) Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." from (Proverbs 3.34)

There never was a Shepherd of the Flock of God who spoke more strongly and yet more kindly than the Chief Shepherd, Jesus. Dear OIC Saints, your pastor and your leaders need all of your prayers so that we will, in fact, be (1 Peter 5.3) nor yet {not} as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. As I preach to all the flock, the Christian Life is not difficult, it is "impossible," That is why God gave us His very Spirit. This applies even more to those who lead and teach. If it is your calling, you cannot live without it! Please pray for us. We imperfect Leaders are given our authority to lead directly from the Chief Leader, Jesus. Christians who do not respect "our calling" more than they might respect each of us, are divisive in the Church.

PLEASE NOTE: respecting our authority does not mean agreeing with everything we say or do.

Immature Christians will trend to "divisiveness," but that must quickly change. Knowing the immature required a special reminder, Peter says in (1Peter 5.5a): younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; Now, here in (1Peter 5.5b) the Apostle Peter also filled with the Holy Spirit as the Apostle Paul to write the Holy Bible, gets right back to the Apostle Paul's teaching in our main text today (Romans 12.4-5) 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And as Peter wrote: and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." from (Proverbs 3.34)

Shows Mercy, Rom. 12.8 - he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. When a conflict with others, saint or sinner, we may have to force ourselves to show mercy. Yes, if we were more like Jesus it might be easier. But, our Helper, Holy Spirit, constrains us to yield to God's ways. The Old Testament Prophet, Micah, gave this message from God to the Jewish people in (Micah 6.8/ KJ21) He hath shown thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Our Helper constrains to obey the word. This is good. But, with earnest prayer, we will be more like Micah's message to not only show mercy, but love mercy. Then cheerfulness will be flowing in the Spirit with our action.

The following exhortations and instructions towards godly living don't need much explanation or exegesis. 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; I think that I should attempt to "bring out meaning" for Let love be without hypocrisy. The original Greek New Testament (MOUNCE) for "without hypocrisy" is "anypokritos" translated "genuine." The same Greek Dictionary has like meanings as: unfeigned, real, sincere. Now I know how hard it is for us all in our efforts to not hurt someones feelings we feel we must say the "nice thing." I have trouble with this as a pastor, for I must often call people to be accountable for their sin! We all have trouble with this. I must say, as Americans can tend to be too blunt and hurtful in correction; Japanese, are kind of at the opposite end of this. Japanese have been taught to honor others. Neither unfeeling bluntness nor

honoring someone when they have sinned is God's will. This simple instruction in (Romans 12.9) requires much prayer for both Americans and Japanese Christians. But, the context of the members of the Body of Christ in the Local Church means we all must risk hurting feelings so that we all may follow the Apostle Pauls instructions in (Ephesians 4.15-16) but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

TAKEAWAY #4

If we at OIC draw closer together as a Family in Jesus, we will understand each others imperfections; but, be able to be honest with each other. We must all remember in all our struggles in this world and in the Church that Love never fails. From (1 Corinthians 13.8) Next in (Romans 12.10-11) 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; Brotherly love is not natural, yet God makes it happen in Christians who have presented themselves as Living Sacrifices. Reviewing my opening remarks and the Main Theme of the Book of Romans: living in AWE OF GOD for our Justification, leads to Dedicated Service. As we serve in our Home Church we connect better with fellow Christians. As an imperfect Family, we can work out differences in Love. Here, the Apostle Paul makes it clear that we are not only devoted to Jesus, but also to one another in brotherly love. Love puts others ahead of ourseves as we honor them. Diligence means that "We are not playing Church like a computer game. Church holds Eternity inside it for those outside its walls. These need to see the Body of Christ with love like that of Jesus. God will reveal how each of us are to serve Him, as we mature. If you don't know yet, "Then do something, anything, to help your Home Church!"

Next, in (Romans 12.12) rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, Rejoicing: from my Introduction(above) "We Christians, Jews or Gentiles, are "The Chosen." Our hope is

set on the Rock of the Word of God, and kept alive day by day with God's Spirit, our Helper, which He has given us. Our Hope; the declaration by God that we are no longer guilty but we are made righteous on the basis of Jesus' death on The Cross to buy OUR eternal forgiveness. Our Hope is the Faith for Salvation, God's Gift, and will become sight when we see Jesus. If we remember these truths, we will be *persevering in tribulation*, The confidence we gain as we mature does not cause us to be arrogant, or proud but we are *devoted to prayer*, This all gets molded into us as we walk with Jesus to Glory, and we will find ourselves led to **Dedicated Service:** serving God and His People in our Home Church.

You must first get connected to Jesus Christ before you can connect with Christians at your local church, OIC. As the Apostle Peter's verse of "Seed Gospel Faith" says in (1Peter 3.18a) "For Christ also died for sins, once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God," For All – means YOU! There is a wonderful song that calls sinners to Jesus that I would, some day after the allergy season, sing to you all, and especially for anyone here who is not yet Born Again in Christ. I pray the words of this song may move you who are on the "outside" of the Family of God to come to Jesus. I beseech you to come to Him today! Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart!

It is no secret what God can do
What He's done for others
He'll do for you
With arms wide open
He'll pardon you
It is no Secret, What God can do.

Let Us pray,

REFERENCES

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