

2024/05/12

SERMON: Justification: Leads to Godly Living in the World**GOOD Morning OIC,****We now return to the Book of Romans, a Letter written by the Apostle Paul, to several churches in Rome with many Jews in attendance. So a brief review is in order:****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 can be free of fear to lead a "Godly" Life in a "sinful" World under an Anti-Christ Roman Government.**

In my Message, **Justification leads to Dedicated Service**, two weeks ago on Sunday April 28th I preached that: "When we are living in AWE OF GOD as we serve in our Home Church we connect better with fellow Christians. The Apostle Paul makes it clear that if we are devoted to Jesus, we will *present ourselves to God as Living Sacrifices*. If we do this with diligence we will also have courage to risk closer relationships with Christians in our Local Church. Then it will be true that **"We are not playing Church like a computer game."**

We consider the faith needed for relationships in our Local Church important. There is victory in prayer to have this faith. Victory in prayer to have the faith that conquers the world, the flesh and the devil shows up in victory in relationships in our Local Church.

Last week's Message on May 5th, titled: **Faith-Prayer is the Victory** with Bible verses from **1John & Matthew**, fit in well with the previous week's Bible Text 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; Quoting my May 5th Message here: "Brotherly love is not natural, yet God makes it happen in Christians who have presented themselves as *Living Sacrifices*" as taught us in the 12th Chapter of Romans. In that Message on May 5th I attempted to bring out the meaning in the Apostle John's teaching, as Jesus had taught him,

about **LOVE**. I also noticed that Jesus encouraged the church to have authority to discipline “sinning” Christians in the Church. This was the authority He gives through *prayer*. **This must be called Tough Love, but Jesus was not going to let Christians abuse other Christians in His Church.** As I quoted the New American Bible Revised (NASBRE) notes: **“Church Discipline-“The church’s judgment will be ratified in heaven, i.e., by God (Mt 18:18-20).”** *18 Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19 Again, [amen,] I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* Jesus’ “Tough Love” means that Heaven will act upon prayerful Church Discipline.

TAKEAWAY#1

I open with this before the exegesis of today's Bible verses from Romans. My wife, Dorothy and I have been praying how I, an under-shepherd, and she, my helpmate, can guide OIC with the Chief Shepherd, Jesus, towards closer relationships with each other. The last two sermons were titled: “Justification: Leads to Dedicated Service” and “Faith-Prayer is the Victory.” These sermons had an emphasis on “Loving One Another.” **Our desire is to encourage OIC to simply know one another more closely and have more prayer together. This will produce or create more loving one for another as Jesus taught.**

Now reading **(Romans 12.14-15)** *14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.* Paul begins several “how to live” instructions, most as only one sentence or line. This is similar in format and wording to Solomon's Book of Proverbs in the Older Testament of the Bible. In **Verse .14** God is asking Christians to give unconditional love to those who persecute them. Sinners curse and malign people who hurt them. But giving *agape*, (Greek) *unconditional Love*, is what God gave to us as He drew us to Faith in Jesus. When Jesus was being nailed to The Cross He declared this beautiful soul saving statement of unconditional love when He said in **(Luke 23.33-34) 33** *When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. 34 But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”*

(Romans 12.15) *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.* Thus the instruction to have empathy and compassion on your fellow human beings, not just Christians. Sharing their *joys and sorrows* is pleasing to God who loves all people.

(Romans 12.16) *Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.* And, for a better meaning in

(Romans 12.16a/AMPC) *Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty (snobbish, high-minded, exclusive).* I included this translation to help Christians to not be so afraid of being “haughty” or “arrogant;” that they might withhold Words from Jesus' Spirit to help their brothers and sisters in Christ. You may recall from last week's sermon in **(Ephesians 4.15)** *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,*” The Holy Spirit will do His job faithfully to whisper inside us when we have “snobbish, high-minded, exclusive” motives rather than true love. God's Spirit chooses the gifts for all Christians. Remember, we all have the Holy Spirit to enable our following these instructions in the Bible. Sometimes I received profound and needed instruction from Jesus from Christians not called to the Ministry in a simple chat or talk, even in the parking lot outside the church building. Why? You may ask? Because I was starving to hear from Jesus! And the Bible tells us in **(1 Corinthians 1.30)** *But by His {God's} doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us {ALL} wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,*

In **(Romans 12.16b/AMPC)** *but readily adjust yourself to [people, things] and give yourselves to humble tasks. Never overestimate yourself or be wise in your own conceits.* All Christians are missionaries to some extent. Missionaries are gifted by God to make large adjustments to both “people” in a foreign culture, and “things”, of that culture itself. But this Bible verse is for all Christians to have a similar “missionary” attitude in their own culture or society. Whatever Calling God gives you, you must never be above “humble tasks.” Jesus said in **(Mark 10.42-45)** *42 So Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their superiors exercise authority over them. 43But it shall not be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. 45For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”*

(Romans 12.17) *Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.* We see here that a Christian's life is very supernatural even without obvious miracles. Our sinful human nature moves us to *pay back evil for evil.* Looking back to Jesus on The Cross and His plea for forgiving those crucifying Him should humble us to obey this teaching. We are told here to *Respect* what even non-Christians see as right. Every society on planet Earth has many attitudes of *Right and Wrong* that do not disagree with the Bible. We must respect these except for any anti-Christian distortions or standards.

(Romans 12.18) tells us *If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.* This applies to relationships to fellow Christians and non-Christians. But note, sometimes it is not

possible for agreement in a situation when both persons don't perceive or see the truth clearly.

This is not a Believer sinning against you, but disagreeing with you. The words “*so far as it depends on you*” shows that God knows you can not always get the other person to do the right thing after you did work for peace. In those cases peace may only be maintained by accepting a rather distant relationship. The Holy Spirit leads us to be loving here as well, in these less than desirable relationships in the Body of Christ. If this is with a Christian, I have found the following expression helpful: “**We will understand it better over there {in Heaven}!**”

We read in **(Romans 12.19)** *Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord.* Paul quotes the Older Testament here from **(Deuteronomy 32.35-36)** *‘Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them.’*

36 *“For the LORD will vindicate His people, And will have compassion on His servants, When He sees that their strength is gone, And there is none remaining, bond or free.*

TAKEAWAY#2

It is important, dear saints at OIC, that we don't confuse our loving our enemies from God's deciding to punish them with retribution when He, not we, decide. John Wesley apparently never breathed anything but “Love your enemies” as Jesus' command in (Matthew 5.43-49) *“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous....* Yet John Wesley had ten recorded “Divine Retributions” in his ministry in England during the 18th Century. These were judgments by the Lord Jesus against his fierce enemies. The Holy Spirit was working through John and Charles Wesley for many salvations and many miracles of power to the Glory of Jesus name! These details are from the United Methodist Church Archives and printed in the book (*The Supernatural Occurrences of John Wesley*, Jennings). These retributions include: A minister struck with violent illness during a sermon against John Wesley; Hanging suicide; Loss of speech; Struck dead before he can do more harm to the Wesleys' Kingdom Work.

Our action with enemies, leaving Jesus' work of judgment in His hands, is confirmed in **(Romans 12.20-21)** *“BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.”* **21** *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* This confirms the last meaning or exegesis of v.19. We are thus

commanded to not only love our enemies but try to find an “act of love” to them! But, pastor, burning coals seems like our causing “punishment!” No! The burning coals is God's mercy to bring repentance to bring them back closer to Jesus or to save them from an Eternity in Hell!

Now Paul's Letter to Rome turns to the Christian's relationship with the Government he lives under in this world with the instruction to **Be Subject to It**. You don't have to be an expert in 1st Century History to know that Christians were often persecuted even unto death being fed to wild animals in the Roman Colosseum. We see that Jesus never tried to overpower the Roman Government as it was about to arrest him at the Garden of Gethsemane. **(Matthew 26.51-54)** *And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. 53 Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?”* So the churches in Rome are instructed to submit to authority, but Paul is emphasizing “civil” not “religious law which was pagan such as the worship of the Emperor or Caesar.” I knew a sincere American Christian who was so upset with the unlawful and un-American activities that created the Vietnam War, where he had suffered greatly as a soldier, that he refused to pay his taxes. Paying taxes is “civil law” and no threat to a Christian's activity in the church.

(Romans 13.1-2) *Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.* Paul is here anticipating rebelling against all Roman Law due to the persecution of the church. Remember also, Roman Believers were recently in a pagan society and might easily revert to criminal behavior with that attitude. Paul essentially now says that God will not protect Christians who act that way! *They will receive condemnation upon themselves.* This is not condemnation by God into Hell. But, prison or possibly death for breaking the Civil Law. This would not Glorify God as a martyr's death would.

(Romans 13.3-4) says next, *For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; 4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.*

And then **(Romans 13.5-7)** *Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of*

God, devoting themselves to this very thing. 7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. Paul knew that every government, no matter how anti-Christ, has workers who diligently try to keep their society cared for. This is similar to giving honor to soldiers who fight to protect our nation, even though we know all nations are passing away as Jesus' Kingdom Comes.

According to **(Romans 13.5)** a Christian's conscience is a factor in his relationship with his government as in “*for conscience sake*” The Biblical Greek word for conscience from several New Testament locations—*syneidēsis* - means : 1) a present idea, 2) persisting notion, 3) impression of reality. 4) the inward moral and spiritual frame. Because I believe that there are usually **emotions deep inside people that relate to these clear definitions, I emphasize the meanings of 2) persisting notion and 4) conscience, as the inward moral and spiritual frame.** Without that “persisting notion” to bother a person, conscience would not be very effective in most people. Also, as I preached in a previous Message, the American Indians, not Christians but a very religious pagan society, had a great teaching on the persisting feelings of emotion and conscience. A troubled conscience is like a square rod turning inside a circular hole! A Christian keeping his conscience clear is vital to stay in relationship with Jesus.

I cannot skip quickly over the Biblical teaching or concept of conscience that **(Romans 13.5)** brought up regarding being subject to the government. So, I must jump ahead to **(Romans 14.22-23)** *The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.* God has not left us alone to apply the Bible. He has given us His Spirit. There was a time when God showed me that my conscience had been malformed, or twisted from my previous life of sin. If God does not tell me now that He is healing my conscience, as when I was first Born-Again, then I submit to my own conscience. The Holy Spirit will show each of us our conscience, if we pray! Conscience is a way for God to keep you from sin. This is different from self-condemnation.

However, sometimes we are stubborn to keep an activity that we want to continue doing just because it is not clearly labelled a “Sin” according to the Bible. If a Christian ignores the true messages from his own conscience, then he must ask himself two questions 1) Is this my true conscience or is this the Devil accusing me of something that is not really a “sin?” 2) If truly this is your conscience, ask yourself this question: Is it worth risking my Eternal Life to hold onto some activity that is against my **conscience? Then, or maybe first, but he must ask Jesus as well!** God is patient to answer your prayer about conscience more than once. Holy Spirit will gently reveal to you “your true conscience!” He will make it clear that the Devil is not robbing you of

your *freedom in Christ*. Holy Spirit does His job *perfectly*. After God has started answering your prayer, patiently and typically more than once, after you do the “activity” in question; and then, if you keep rejecting His Wisdom, His answer; then your heart will grow hard toward Him! This is a wall of bitterness to “have our own way” regarding something you can **“live without!”** If you insist to willfully keep this activity against your conscience after Holy Spirit has convinced you of the truth about your conscience, then it becomes **the “Sin of Rebellion.”** **(1 Samuel 15.23/AMP)** *“For rebellion is as [serious as] the sin of divination (fortune-telling), And disobedience is as [serious as] false religion and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you.....{King Saul} as king.”* **Any Christian who continues to decide to do this is calling himself “LORD,” not Jesus!**

TAKEAWAY#3

A Christian's conscience is a personal inner “judge” in their inner being. If it is not kept “clear” it will cloud and will block his hearing communications by the Spirit of Jesus within the inner man. We all are different for reasons only God understands. Just because the Bible does not call an activity sin, that does not mean you can “do it against your conscience!” God will heal any conscience that has been twisted by your sinful past. But, it will still be your, and not someone else's conscience. It is your responsibility to pray for Holy Spirit to reveal your true conscience as you begin to mature in your walk with Jesus. He will always answer kindly and with the promise of His Divine Help. Rejecting His answer can turn into your hardened heart rejecting Jesus!

(Romans 13.8) *Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.* In this world of credit cards and borrowing from banks it is unlikely that we have no debt to any “business.” The extreme danger with money, is to owe money to any individual. This ruins many relationships in any society. As we saw Paul's statement about himself in **(Romans 1.14-15)** *I am under obligation {or a debtor to} both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.* The Apostle Paul knew how the gift of salvation that he received was totally undeserved, as for us all. Loving his Lord meant obedience to his answering Jesus' call on his life; but also, with Loving his Neighbor, it meant to preach the Gospel of Jesus to the ends of the earth. Whether near, or far, *for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.* That is the spirit of the Law, as last week I had in my message. As Jesus answered a Jewish Lawyer who was testing Him in **(Matthew 22.36-40)** *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?37 And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND*

WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ 40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

If God has not called you to love neighbors by preaching, He has called all of us to fulfill the Law by loving our neighbor. As Jesus said in **(Luke 6.31-32)**. *Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. 32 If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.*

Now Paul repeats fulfilling the Law by loving your neighbor in **(Romans 13.9)**. *For this, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”* Paul ends this verse with Jesus' closing remark to the lawyer who tested Him in **(Matthew 22.39)**, *‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’*

Now Paul adds a powerful yet simple theology of the definition of LOVE IN ACTION and the LAW in **(v.10)** *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

These verses in the Book of Romans are the Apostle Paul's New Testament teachings similar to Solomon's Book of Proverbs. The difference is that we know that we have an eternal, never-ending relationship with the Lord Jesus. Solomon's Proverbs were aimed at life on Earth, while Paul's are aimed at life on Earth continuing into Heaven. These teachings are challenging yet very practical to Christian Living. I think these teachings and instructions fit the title of a book - - - I forgot the author - - - which I heard about when I was working at Evangel College in Springfield, Missouri, USA.

YES, YES LIVING IN A NO, NO WORLD!

Let Us Pray

REFERENCES

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