

**SERMON: Justification: Christian Freedom & Duty**

**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. 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 but also, in these Bible verses, Paul's Letter to Rome emphasizes that "freedom" carries a heavy responsibility to protect fellow Christians' conscientious choices.

Some review on the context and connections that the Apostle Paul was presenting in Romans Chapters 13&14. Quoting from my sermons on May 12<sup>th</sup> and May 5<sup>th</sup>, "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. My Message on May 5<sup>th</sup>, titled: **Faith-Prayer is the Victory** with Bible verses from **1John & Matthew**, fit in well with the previous week's, April 28<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> Message here: "Brotherly love is not natural, yet God makes it happen in Christians who have presented themselves as *Living Sacrifices*." Presenting ourselves as *Living Sacrifices* was taught us in the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Romans. In that Message on May 5<sup>th</sup> I attempted to bring out the meaning in the Apostle John's teaching, as Jesus had taught him, about **LOVE**. The overriding command by the Lord Himself in (**Matthew 22.37-40**) was "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." **I referred to this command last week on May 12<sup>th</sup>.**

Summarizing these last four sermon titles:

**April 28<sup>th</sup> - Justification: Leads to dedicated Service**

**May 5<sup>th</sup> - Faith-Prayer is the Victory**

**May 12<sup>th</sup> - Justification: Leads to Godly Living in the World**

**May 19<sup>th</sup> - Justification: Christian Freedom & Duty**

These Messages had many other instructions than these titles by the Holy Spirit. But I believe, with my **not** avoiding the exegeis of any one verse, that the Lord led this pastor to focus on a special message from Jesus to OIC. This Message concerns the fact that when the “personal” relationship of a Christian with the Lord Jesus overflows, it leads to better loving relationships within the Body of Christ, and in particular in the Local Church. Also, this works both ways in that as we commit to closer relationships with Christians, we will walk closer to Jesus. The Local Church is where “God shows up” most in power to fulfill Jesus' Promise “*to build My Church.*” The Local Church is where Christians grow through conflict and prayer; and by working hand in hand with each other. By God's grace, my focus was Jesus' heart to command His Children to *love one another*, the New Commandment He gave in **(John 13.34-35/Mounce)** *A new commandment I give to you : **Love one another.** Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*” Let us keep this focus for OIC. But also know that Jesus' life and teaching made it clear that God's Children should not limit their love to only fellow Christians.

So now onward through the Book of Romans. We had read the Apostle Paul's one line summary of many Bible texts, saying the Spirit of the Law is LOVE in **(Romans 13.10)**. *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

It almost seems like Paul is, in a way, using this simple instruction and exhortations to sum up all the teachings in the New Testament about *Love*, and especially in his Letter to the Romans.

Then in **(Romans 13.11/MOUNCE)** **11** *And live this way knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to **awaken from sleep**; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed* I prefer “*And live this way*” from the Greek **(MOUNCE)** over “*Do this*” **(NASB/1995)**. *And live this way*, that is the way shown us by the Apostle Paul's practical applications in Romans Chapters 13 and 14. These teachings are much like the Proverbs for everyday life, for Christians who are set free from their sins and the Law by Jesus' Sacrifice. Christians living *this way* fulfill the Spirit of the Law!

*Awaken from sleep* (v.11)...this is the Apostle's exhortation, encouragement, and persuasion for spiritual alertness. Spiritual alertness is important for Christians as soldiers in Christ's service as the Apostle Peter implored Believers in **(1 Peter 5.8/MOUNCE)**: *Be sober-minded! Be alert! Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.* But also Jesus warned Believers of the danger in forgetting that Christianity falls apart without faith in **God's Control of “all things” until the End of Time; and without Faith for the Promises for Believers at the End of Time.** The Bible word for study of the Bible in the End Times is

Eschatology. We must remember to be **alert regarding the End Times**. To forget these End Times Teachings by Jesus, as these five *foolish virgins* did, is even more dangerous than not staying alert regarding the Devil. This kind of spiritual sleep regarding Jesus' Return **leads to losing contact with the Saviour**; thus, it leads to replacing Him with some idol or false god. We see this clearly in His teaching to His disciples after they had asked Him in **(Matthew 24.3)** *As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"* First Century Communicators, Jesus being the best, of course, knew parables hit the mind and heart of the Jewish and other cultures of that time. So Jesus answers their big question with the **Parable of Ten Virgins in (Matthew 25.1-13)** *"Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. 3 For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, 4 but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. 5 Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. 6 But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' 10 And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. 11 Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' 12 But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 **Be on the alert** then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.*

Jesus is saying that missing Heaven can happen if Christians are foolish and not **"on the alert"** to watch or anticipate Jesus' unpredictable and thus imminent return. Christians who do not watch for Jesus will become Christians who live only for their lives on Earth. **They will backslide!** That roaring lion, Devil, will see their focus on temporal living. He will have a great time discouraging them to not have perseverance until the trumpet of war against him sounds no more! Also, although we can see a clear analogy to having "oil in my lamp" with "having the Holy Spirit," the failure to actively watch for Jesus' return leads to backsliding out of the "FAITH" and the losing of the Holy Spirit's "oil" in their lamp of their bodies, and thus; they have backslid out of "Their Saving Faith."

**(Romans 13.11b)** *for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.* The Book of Romans has encouraged Christians as **God's Chosen People** to have confidence that He will keep us safe for Heaven. Yet, in the same Letter Paul strongly reminds and implores Christians to not forget that Christianity is an **End Time Religion**, the *not yet*, and how to live, *this way*, in their

everyday lives, ***the already!*** D.L. Moody, the famous 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Preacher, once met a sincere Christian young girl doing her evangelistic duty in a railroad station. She was asking strangers: *Are you saved?* This Man of God answered her: *I was saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved!* D.L. Moody knew in a personal way the TRUTH of **(Romans 13.11b)** *salvation is nearer to us than when we {first} believed.*

**(Romans 13.12)** *The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.* All Christians need to ask for help to have the attitude of a prophet..the attitude of the Apostles of Christ including Paul. He saw life in the light of Eternity. He knew about what the Apostle John wrote in **(John 1.3-5):** *All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.* What Jesus accomplished on the Cross was not only to buy forgiveness of sin, but also, to take away the life threatening power of the *Prince of Darkness.* **(Hebrews 2.14)** says: *He Himself likewise also partook of the same {flesh and blood}, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.*

In **(John 1.5)...** ***The darkness did not comprehend it.*** I like the amplified version in its interpretation in **(John 1.5/AMPC)** *And the Light shines on in the darkness, for the darkness has never overpowered it [put it out or absorbed it or appropriated it, and is unreceptive to it].* **Christians** need to keep this confidence in the power of the Light, Jesus, that was not overpowered by the Devil's darkness when Jesus walked on earth, even on the Cross. We will continue to shine despite the Devils activities in the End Times as told to us in the Holy Bible. As in **(Romans 13.12):** *The night is almost gone, and the day is near* means we look confidently forward to seeing the Light, Jesus, personally.

Many Christians are correct to say they don't worry about the Devil's working in the world today because "I know how the Book ends." That refers to the book of John's Revelation in **(Revelation 20.10)** *And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.* This is correct ***End Times thinking, Bible Eschatology.***

However, Dear Saints at OIC, do you have that same confidence for the Last Chapter of **your Book, the Book of Your Life on Earth?** **Jesus is here today and wants Holy Spirit to give you that personal confidence in the Light of Jesus overcoming the darkness of Death and the Devil in your Life and especially the Last Chapter of it on Earth.**

**(Romans 13.12b)** *put on the armor of light.* Living The Christian life is *impossible*, humanly speaking. God has given us His Spirit so He asks us to not only have *faith* but also do *acts of faith*, in particular, prayer to Jesus for all our needs, cares, dreams, desires...LIFE! ...and also, God's Armor to fight the Devil. This is prayer of a *soldier in God's Army*, in the continuing war against the Devil, until the Trumpet call to war sounds no more! We Christians are taught this activity in prayer in **(Ephesians 6.10-12)** *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

I know Christians who say that the Devil is a *defeated enemy!* Don't worry about him. They are wrong, except..YES, don't worry... but FIGHT! ..and to Fight we need God's, not our own carnal, Armor! As I preached in my Message on *the Cross* on April 21<sup>st</sup>, Jesus' heel was bruised by the Devil on the Cross; but, at the same time, the Devil's head was bruised beyond repair, but not yet *crushed*. Paul was not teaching Believers in Jesus do do something in prayer if it were not necessary for victorious living. I encourage all Christians to often review the Armor of God in the 6<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Ephesians: Truth, Righteousness, Prepared to share the Gospel, Faith, Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Holy Spirit which is the Word of God.

**(Romans 13.13-14)** Let us behave properly *as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But {instead} put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.* “*behave properly as in the day*” – We are in Christ Jesus, who is the Light. We have the Spirit of God to live a holy life in this dark world as if the Lord had Already returned, “*in the Day.*”

Then Paul lists several sinful **continual** behaviors: drunkenness, *sexual promiscuity {sexual pleasure outside marriage}*, *sensuality {lust of the eye and obsessed with enjoyment of temporal pleasures}*, *strife {not loving others}*, and *jealousy {coveting what others have, dissatisfied with God's gifts to you}*. Sin is never okay with God, nor should it be okay with any Christian. But I added the adjective **continual** for the things listed are “ways of life” not just a falling into one sin. This is clearly implied as habitual living from the words *Let us behave properly as in the day.*

In **(v.14)** *But {instead} put on the Lord Jesus Christ.* This includes praying on God's Armor for Battle against The Devil and his messengers; but also, praying that God would answer the desires of your heart and cause you to become *more like His Son, Jesus* day by day. Continuing verse 14, “*make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*” The devil sometimes puts a temptation ahead of us on our path. We cannot prevent that. God has promised that He will provide a way of

escape for each and every one of these temptations. **(1 Corinthians 10.13)** says, *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.* But we sometimes are arrogant about God's faithfulness and do things that invite such temptation in our lives. This is making *provision for the flesh*. The books we read, the magazines we look at, the movies we watch and the friends we hang out with are a few ways that we would be **making** *provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts*.

Now Paul instructs Christians some very difficult but vitally important Principles of Conscience. We read in **(Romans 14.1-3)** *Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. 2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. 3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.* The source of this concern in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century was the prevailing pagan activity of sacrificing animals to idols in Pagan Temples” and then selling the meat at the food market. Truly the activity in the temple is worshiping demons. However, Paul refused to say that the Devil owned the animals or their meat. Paul had dealt with this in detail in Corinth a few years earlier than his Letter to Rome. We see in **(1 Corinthians 8.4-7)** *4Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. 5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him 7However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.* Paul is here saying in **(v.5)** that the meat, even as the animal, still belongs to God and came to men on Earth through Jesus. But, we must care about our brothers in Christ as the fact is that *not all men have this knowledge*. I would bring out or exegete an implied meaning here that “If a Christian has this head knowledge, that the meat still came from God through Jesus, and belongs to him, but their conscience bothers them *over this knowledge*, then they must obey their conscience and not eat it.

In **(1 Corinthians 8.7)** *“their conscience being weak is defiled.”* I remember as a just born-again Christian a “mature” Christian, a mentor in our fellowship, insulted me for my *weak conscience*. He was correct in fact, but not in spirit. As I matured in Jesus I no longer cared how weak my conscience is or was, as I hear the Holy Spirit teach me all things pertaining to doing only those things that I can from faith! There is no shame in being weak for as King David sang in **(Psalm 18.1)** *“I love You, O Lord, my strength.”*

**Now from Corinth back to the similar topic in Rome : (Romans 14.3- 4)** *3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

#### **TAKEAWAY#1**

*My mentor in my first year as a Christian' who was "mature" in many ways, was immature about a young believer's struggle to know his conscience and God's instructions. It became clear as "the Lord is able to make him {Bruce} stand. God did! Praise His Holy Name! But, a note to young believers: much of what he taught me was correct and helped me grow in the Lord. I did not reject all his teaching, but was very hurt by him. Later in my life after God chastened or disciplined me for giving in to activities that He had showed were against my conscience. It was then that I realized how my early mentor missed the spirit of having compassion on a young Christian with a "weak" conscience. It is better to have a "weak" conscience than none at all, dear Saints.*

**(Romans 14.5-9)** *One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Paul never told Born-Again Jews that they had to stop celebrating their religious holidays or practices. Most of these were directly from the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament. Paul himself even took a vow during one of his missionary trips in **(Acts 18.18)** *Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.**

In **(Romans 14.7)** Paul wrote: *7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.* This is the key to our freedom and the duty to respect other Christians' conscientious choices and religious habits. We do not live for ourselves, but for our Jesus. Life and death is not under our choice or control. If we live for Jesus sincerely, I am confident that we will die for Him the same way. I remember a famous evangelistic saying: "Everyone {Christians} wants to go to Heaven, but no one wants to die!" Well, the above verse in Romans implies God will cause us not only to live for Jesus, but die for Jesus as well. As I said earlier

today the Last Chapter in the Book of your Life depends on the Lord, not you. He is worth trusting!

**(Romans 14.10-12)** *10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, in {Isaiah 45.23}: “AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.” 12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.* Our old sinful nature keeps trying to kick Jesus off the *throne of our hearts*. Judging our brother for his conscientious choices in faith is “sin.” Feelings of contempt for any Christians must be nailed to the Cross in prayer by all of us immediately, as Holy Spirit will convince us of this horrible thought life. We Christians will all stand before King Jesus to be judged, not for our Promised future to see and be with Him forever, our Entrance into Heaven, but for rewards for our Christian Life on Earth. I expect we will all “have some tears” as God shows us the “Movie of our Life” since we came to Christ. The part of our sinful movie before we accepted Christ has been erased and is in God's Sea of Forgetfulness!

Now in **(Romans 14.13-15)** *Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way. 14 I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. 15 For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.*

In my April 28<sup>th</sup> Message titled **Justification: Leads to dedicated Service**, Paul wrote **(Romans 12.10)** *10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;* This verse fits with **(Romans 14.13)** *not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.* It is easy to “demand our rights of freedom in Christ.” This must never be at the expense of hurting a brother or sister in Christ. It is important to recall our Justification Gift. If we had demanded our rights with God we would have received what all Men deserve. Hell! But God gave us the gift of Mercy and Grace. So brotherly love gives preference to one another in honor. Next in **(Romans 14.14)** *nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* This means respecting another Christian's conscientious choices is giving him honor and pleasing God. And in **(Romans 14.15)** *For if because of food your brother is hurt,*

*you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.*

Looking ahead to Romans Chapter 14, **(Romans 14.23)** sums up the focal point of **conscience** for a Christian: *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.* **This “whatever” applies all these teachings inspired by Holy Spirit to all activities in life. This “whatever” is personal life and religious practices and relationships with people and governments.** Here in **(Romans 14.15b)** *Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.* Therefore, if a “strong” Christian pushed another Christian into a behavior that bothers his or her conscience, and that continues; the weak Christians will backslide out of the faith. Destroy means spiritually destroyed and that person will *perish in Hell.*

**(Romans 14.16)** *Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;* It is important that we exercise our freedoms in Christ mindful of the current audience. The good thing we do, with the wrong audience, will be spoken of *as evil.*

**(Romans 14.17)** *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* The Holy Spirit is not a spirit of Gnosticism, or calling all material things evil or all enjoyments sin. The Bible makes it clear that what was true of God before Christ came is still true as David wrote: **(Psalm 16.11)** *You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.* The teachings in Romans and the whole Bible emphasize behavior of Believers is so much connected with relationship with God and with His people. Christians concerned or serious about a close relationship with Jesus will be open to His making known to them *the path of life.* That also implies making known the paths of death to not walk in.

**(Romans 14.17)** *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking* does not speak against either activity. So much of these chapters in Romans have set Christians free about what they eat, drink or celebrate. The “kingdom of God” is not **what you eat or drink**, nor is it, **what you do not eat or drink**. *But* Paul is pointing to living in light of Eternity with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is now in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. When we no longer have these physical bodies, we will see Jesus. We will no longer need to eat and drink, however there will be eating and drinking in Heaven. Jesus has been fasting the Passover Meal since the Last Supper the night Jesus was betrayed and arrested! In **(Luke 22.14-16)** *14 When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. 15 And He said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”* Christians now have tastes, or various depths like drinking in a large glass of liquid, of the Kingdom of God's *righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*. When they see Jesus they will have, what one of my favorite praise songs says, “*Joy unspeakable and Full of Glory.*” As I have worked my brain and maybe yours with wonderful words like *eschatology, justification* and others; I was reminded by Jesus of His teaching in **(Luke 18.17)** *Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.* So before my pastoral prayer I am showing two short Kids Song about Heaven which points our hearts to the Kingdom of God with Jesus.

***Let Us Pray***

## REFERENCES

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