

**SERMON: Justification: Maturity & Perseverance**

**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 are given God's power to finish their lives in His plan.**

Let us start with the last verse from my Message on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, titled **Justification: Maturity & Self-Denial**. Paul ends the theme of Christian Maturity with a prayer and exhortation for the Roman Believers in **(Romans 15.13)** *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by **the power of the Holy Spirit***. Paul's personal Experiential Christianity, having received the filling of the Holy Spirit at the hands of Ananias, of course, would have him wanting this greater empowerment for all the Christians in Rome.

In **(Romans 15.14)** *And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.*

The expression "*full of goodness*" needs some exegeting or explaining. The word "good" we saw defined when Jesus confronted a "Rich Young Ruler" in **(Mark 10.17-18)**: *As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.* The Apostle Paul's *full of goodness* meaning here is clarified in the Greek New Testament: with ἀγαθωσύνη (agathōsynē) which means: goodness, virtue, beneficence. Jesus was aiming at the "Rich Young Ruler's" spiritual versus material values as he was very wealthy, but Paul is commending the Romans as **virtuous** Christians. The next phrase in **(Romans 15.14)** *filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another* shows the Apostle's confidence in the Church (actually several home churches) in Rome. Paul had confidence in the Roman Christians. In this confidence, he may have been close to that of the Apostle John for the churches to whom he was writing. John says in **(1 John 2.26-27)** **26** *These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. 27 As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His*

*anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.* Here the Apostle John is familiar with the Gifting these Christians had received by the Holy Spirit. His confidence was in their “anointing” in the **Greek New Testament/ MOUNCE : χρίσμα (chrisma)**, meaning an anointing in the reception of spiritual privileges. By repeating the pronoun **you** ten times, he encouraged them in **(1 John 2.26-27)**, saying, *those who are trying to deceive you would fail.* John, of course, was their great mentor and teacher; but they had an anointing by Holy Spirit making Jesus' Word alive and true in the face of other teachers. Paul says a similar encouragement to the Roman Christians in **(Romans 15.14)**, *filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.* He encouraged them to share Bible verses (Bible studies) to teach or correct each other in the spirit of brotherhood, that is *admonish*. The Amplified Bible explains well this meaning in **(Romans 15.14/AMPC):** *Personally I am satisfied about you, my brethren, that you yourselves are rich in goodness, amply filled with all [spiritual] knowledge and competent to admonish and counsel and instruct one another also.*

Next, Paul is almost apologetic for his difficult and strong teachings in this Letter to these Romans for he says in **(Romans 15.15-16)**, *But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.* Paul knew that if he made the Word of God too simple, or without challenges, that he would be failing the grace God gave him as *ministering as a priest the gospel of God.* Paul was admonishing himself regarding bold writing. This was also Paul's admonishment and instruction to his pupil Timothy in **(2Tim 2.15)** *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.* Paul wanted to “challenge” the Roman Christians’ faith but not discourage their “confidence.” By the way, OIC Saints, this is what the Book of Romans should be for you also. Paul, ministering God's Word, similarly challenges those called to teach and preach the Bible here at OIC.

**Next** Paul gets vulnerable, or expresses confidence in his gifts from God, in **(Romans 15.17-19):** *Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. 18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, 19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.* This is not egotistical or self-glory boasting, but the facts of his credentials, so that others will take his words seriously to *hear and believe.* He tells further details about his high calling in **(Romans 15.20-21):** *And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where*

*Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; 21 but as it is written,*

“THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE,  
AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.”

**{as Paul quoted the Bible from Isaiah 52.15}**

His *strategy or plans for evangelism and church building* were not entirely his own ideas. For from his first day in Christ we see Ananias' visit to Paul, as I preached here at OIC on June 2<sup>nd</sup>:

Ananias lost his reasonable argument against Jesus, as Ananias knew that Saul, later called to be called Paul, was out to kill “**Jesus Followers.**” Ananias went forth and found Paul as we read in **(Acts 9.15-19):** *But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;* The Apostle Paul persisted in preaching the Gospel in Jewish synagogues during his early preaching Ministry, but eventually he learned what Jesus had told Ananias back in Damascus as we see in **(Acts 13.46-47)** *46 Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. 47 For so the Lord has commanded us, {Then, Paul quotes God's prophetic Word from Isaiah 42.6 & 49.6}:*

‘I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES,  
THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.’”

Then Paul explains in **(Romans 15.22),** *For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you;* I see two reasons for these words, *often been prevented from coming to you.* The first is that God allows us to have our human minds drill down or detail a strategy within what He calls us to do for Jesus. Paul stayed with his strategy which focused on the larger metropolitan centers. But also, only those centers where others had not already preached Christ and Him crucified. Since Rome was a Gentile Capital of the civilized world conquered by Caesar, he knew Gentiles would be there. But, the Devil didn't want the Gentiles, in particular, to hear the Gospel. Satan has strategies as well, and he had been stirring up his children among the Jews to stop Paul. But the Devil must have thought that he himself owned the pagan societies. I see these pagan Gentiles in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century as having an accurate comparison to Japan today. The Shinto, Buddhist, and Superstitious fears of going against Traditions oppose God's Word. This has 99% of the millions of Japanese owned by Satan! In Both Cases, God had then, and has now, another idea and unstoppable plan to save those who are being called to Jesus out of the Devil's darkness. Now Paul reveals his plans for his next Missionary Journey in **(Romans 15.23-24):** *but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to*

you **24** whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while. Paul's strategies were pleasing to God. This is obvious by the numbers of Gentiles receiving the gift of faith in Christ's Sacrifice for sins, their **Justification**. God was about to alter or change Paul's plan to visit Rome on his way to Spain.

And his next voyage back to Jerusalem in **(Romans 15.25-29)** **25** but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. **26** For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. **27** Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. **28** Therefore, when I have finished this {in Jerusalem}, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain. **29** I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

I so love to exegete the Bible, verse by verse, to feed Jesus' Sheep here at OIC. But, as an exception to our study of Romans Chapter 15, there is a powerful lesson for us all from details of Paul's life within the Book of Acts. There we see the details of Paul's calling being fulfilled contrary to his plan as seen in **(Romans 15.28-29)**. The Book of Acts tells us that it would turn out that Paul would come to Rome in chains as a prisoner.

These verses tell of Paul's mission to go back to Jerusalem to bring financial aid to the *Mother or Home Church*, where the Church was born on Pentecost, \*A.D. 30. { \* These dates I am giving are from **Beck, The Holy Bible, An American Translation.** } After Paul had returned to Jerusalem, Satan again stirred up his Jewish children to slander and lie to kill Paul. We see this in **(Acts 21.27-31)** *the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."* **29** For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. **30** Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. **31** While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.

Paul would find favor in the eyes of the Roman commander. Partly for fear that Paul was an authentic Citizen of Rome. But also, that commander obviously, *had* character to keep justice. This is unlike the Lord's trial before another Roman Commander, Pontius Pilate. Pilate said to Jesus "What is Truth?" in **(John 18.38)** Pilate said to Him, "**What is truth?**" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him". But, as God had planned

before the foundation of the Earth, Pilate would not take action for justice and Jesus was Crucified under Pilate's authority to please the Jews.

For Paul, the favor of the Roman Tribune led Paul to Caesarea, and more than two years of *mock trials* with Jews making unproven accusations. Governor Festus was about to send Paul back to Jerusalem. This would mean a likely death on the road by Jews in an ambush waiting for him.

Paul speaks out in **(Acts 25.11)**: *If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar.*” As a Roman citizen Paul's request could not be refused. **12** *Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, “You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go.”*

I encourage you to read the details of this amazing missionary journey in **(Acts 21- Acts 28)**. I have touched upon this journey contrary to Paul's expected plan, yet, I hope we can all see the ultimate fulfillment of the desire of Paul's heart to bring the Gospel and glory to the name of Jesus in God's sovereign power and might.

**I will attempt to make this point in a short time-line summary:**

- Jerusalem, Pentecost, A.D. 56 **(Acts 21-23)**: Paul's plans seemed to go astray as the Jews rioted against him. He was arrested by the Roman Commander (Tribune) for his protection, which included a secret escape with 200 Roman soldiers to Caesarea. We see that our loving Saviour, the God of all encouragement, did not forget Paul. While a prisoner of Rome still in Jerusalem, Jesus appears to Paul to speak against the threats to stop his mission and the completion of his plan to go to Rome in **(Acts 23.11)**: *11 But on the night immediately following {Paul's arrest by Roman soldiers for his protection from rioting Jews}, the Lord stood at his side and said, “Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.”*
- Caesarea, 56-58 A.D **(Acts 24)**: Paul's trial with his testimony of the Gospel before Governor Felix and King Agrippa.
- Caesarea, 58 A.D**(Acts 25-26)**: Paul realizes the Jews were winning the council's and the Governor's heart, so he appeals to Caesar. Paul presents his case, and his salvation testimony to King Agrippa. The King makes no decision as Paul's appeal to Rome must stand.
- Caesarea and the Mediterranean Sea, 58 A.D **(Acts 27)**: Paul sails to Rome with a typhoon (or North Easter storm) destroying the ship on the rocks at Malta. Jesus miraculously saves all the people on board the ship.
- Malta to Rome, 58-59 A.D **(Acts 28)**: Paul has great favor with the Roman soldiers, who knew that a miracle saved them. Their leader, Julius, likely communicated Paul's

citizenship and character, as we read in **(Acts 28.16/Beck)**, *When we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself with the soldiers guarding him.* The miracle of his Mission continued as we see in **(Acts 28.30-31/Beck)**, *For two whole years he lived in his own rented place and welcomed all who came to him. He preached God's Kingdom and very boldly taught the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ, and no one stopped him.*

Therefore, we see that God's Spirit acting in Paul's life, made these years of trials and tests to fit the man in **(Proverbs 16.9)**: *The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps.* As I said earlier, the Lord was pleased by Paul's creativity inside God's call on his life. This is important, for too often we Christians think that our adversities must be from our sin. Holy Spirit's job is to convince you of sin. He will make you to understand. He does this both in sunshine and in rain, so to speak!

We know Paul had a great gift of faith. But that is no excuse to *deify him*. He was a sinner saved by grace, as all Christians are. So, what can we learn from this history, that is, the completion of his Mission as a prisoner in chains? The key verse for this part of Paul's life is back in **(Acts 21.10-13)** on his way back to Jerusalem: **10** *As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"* **12** *When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."* Whatever level of faith God has given each of us, we can have Paul's attitude of living or dying in light of Eternity. Paul remembered **what Jesus had told him personally was very important. He also knew what God had said in the Holy Scriptures.** I have been reminding the OIC Wednesday Bible Study attendees this vital truth as I teach **"Finding God's Call on your Life."** Satan was out to get him, but Paul knew a large part of spiritual warfare is to remember what God had said. Remember, this is what Adam and Eve ignored when Satan talked to Eve in the *Garden of Eden* (with Adam beside Eve in silence): **(Genesis 3.1/KJ21)** *And he {the serpent} said unto the woman, "Yea, hath God said, 'Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"*

Also, Paul lived what he taught in **(Romans 8.28)** *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.* Paul believed the prophet Agabus who had prophesied Paul's arrest in Jerusalem. But he trusted Jesus

with imprisonment even though this seemed like the defeat of God's call to Rome. *All things* means that Satan's activities and efforts will not prevent God's perfect will in a Christian's life. Paul prayed against the Devil's forces as he taught in **(Ephesians 6.12)**: *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.* Paul knew that Satan could not kill him. His death would be God's Perfect will ....to be present with the Lord Jesus forever. Paul also used human means, his Roman citizenship, for his own protection. Jesus faithfully still does miracles when our human efforts that we should try, fail. As a final word on Paul's plans gone wrong, there is strong extra-Biblical evidence that Paul did get to Spain. There is a church there that some Bible scholars believe he planted. Most scholars believe the Roman's gentle house arrest had allowed him go to Spain. Then he returned to Rome on his word only. Paul had gained great respect and honor in particular for his showing no attempt to escape, and his caring for his shipmates, fellow prisoners and Roman soldiers. Then, likely a whim of the current Caesar, brought about his execution according to God's perfect will. To God be the Glory.

**God gives us the desire of our hearts!** This is from **(Psalm 37.3-5)**.

*3 Trust in the LORD and do good;*

*Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.*

*4 Delight yourself in the LORD;*

*And He will give you the desires of your heart.*

*5 Commit your way to the LORD,*

*Trust also in Him, and He will do it.*

God gave Paul the desires of his heart to preach Jesus where no man had preached. When any Christian obeys as best they can "God's Call on his life" Jesus will put desires into his heart, that He will fulfill....sooner or later. Jesus also, as our Spouse and Husband, loves to show His love for us and gives us blessings that are very temporal when we have submitted to His Lordship. For me, that was the surprise of a good friend treating me to a Boston Red Sox game when I was very pressed for finances. For you, something? But remember, God loves you not only when you are doing "spiritual" things. Everything we do is "spiritual" because everything we do is with Jesus!

Therefore. Paul's life itself is the main theme or focus for **Justification: Maturity & Perseverance**. I have attempted to bring out Paul's **perseverance** in this chapter of Romans, and from the historical events in Paul's life around it. He persevered when God seemed to desert him

to his enemies. He witnessed and preached everywhere even as a prisoner of Rome. He took whatever opportunity remained to him and shared Christ in Word and in deed. Paul kept working at his calling and God gave him the desires of his heart in God's way and time, as a prisoner in chains taken to Rome. I believe it is true that God puts, or gives into our hearts, the desires that He is determined to fulfill if we persevere and as Paul instructed in **(Acts 14.22) *Continue in the Faith.***

I have seen that Paul's great and faithful Apostleship for Jesus has some Christians to “almost” deify Paul, a sinner saved by Grace! This is due to their small faith or simply not realizing God can choose to give great amounts of grace to Christians as He chooses and wills. Many times, we Christians are afraid to try great and big things for God as we compare ourselves to Paul. Yet Paul told the disciples for Jesus whom he mentored and taught in **(1Corinthians 11.1/J.B. Phillips), *Copy me, my brothers, as I copy Christ himself.*** I always say that **“There are no great men of God, only men who have learned a little bit better than most of us just how Great God is!”** This was Paul. The Holy Bible says, it can be YOU!

*Let Us Pray*

## REFERENCES

**AMPC** – Amplified Bible Classic, Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation, La Habra, CA 90631. All rights reserved.

**Beck** – **The Holy Bible, An American Translation** by William F. Beck. Lake Publishing Company, Osage Beach, Missouri.

**J.B. Phillips** -

**KJ21- 21st Century King James Version (KJ21)**

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