

SERMON: To The Glory of God's Grace - More for a Closer Walk with Jesus**GOOD Morning OIC & Welcome to Father's House**

Today, we will continue in the Book of Ephesians, the Letter inspired by Holy Spirit and written by the Apostle Paul. In my last Message we saw how Paul gave instructions to the Ephesians, therefore, to all Christians, for living the Christian Life. This week we will see more of Paul's instructions for Walking the Christian Walk, which I have titled: **To The Glory of God's Grace- More for a Closer Walk with Jesus**. Now let us review some of my closing words from my last Message.

In (Ephesians 4.30/TLB) Paul now points to the main theme of all these negative verses, instructions for things **not to do** in a Christian's Life. *Don't cause the Holy Spirit sorrow by the way you live. Remember, he is the one who marks you to be present on that day when salvation from sin will be complete.* And, in another translation, (Ephesians 4.30/EASY) *Do not do anything that will make God's Holy Spirit sad. God gave his Holy Spirit to you to show that you belong to Him. As a result you know that God will make you completely free one day.*

As I had stated under the subtitle **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE- The Christian Life: Living: The Christian Life that is pleasing to our Jesus and His Father, is equally impossible, without God's Helper, Holy Spirit**. I now want to bring out a few more Biblical details of Holy Spirit' work in our behalf as Christians.... Next, the theology of Eschatology, The End of our Lives, and The End of History:

“God will make you completely free one day” needs to be exegeted, or brought out in its complete meaning. The Greek Original clarifies any confusion regarding what *completely free one day* really means. (Ephesians 4.30/MOUNCE) *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* In the original Greek New Testament *σφραγίζω* (*sphragizō*) **Sealed, as stamped with a seal** as in the seals we have in Japan for important papers, in Mounce's translation; and **to show that you belong to Him**, in EASY's translation. Both translations show God 's ownership of us Christians as Beloved Children. So Paul declares **God's gift of the Spirit is to give Christians confidence that they belong to Him.**

But, Christianity would often be masochistic or self-hating in the trials and sufferings God allows in our walk with Jesus if the “seal” were only temporal, without the promise of our Glorious Future. But it is a “seal” by the Holy Spirit until or for the day of { our } redemption. Again, in the original Greek manuscripts the word for *redemption* is ,

(*apolytrōseōs* | ἀπολυτρόσεως), which means: *redemption, a deliverance, procured by the payment of a ransom.* Therefore, *Completely free* is our *day of redemption* (*apolytrōseōs*). Born Again Christians are free from the judgment of their sins the moment they believe on Jesus' finished work to buy their pardon, as in **(Romans 3.24)** *They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption* (*apolytrōseōs* | ἀπολυτρόσεως) *that is in Christ Jesus.* **Justification is freedom from the penalty of sin. But note that most of Paul's letters which include a call for Christians to mature, such as Ephesians, emphasize that Christians are not free from the power of sin which is inside their mortal bodies. Only a new body, Resurrection from the Dead, will completely set us free from that old nature of sin.**

As Paul stated in **(Romans 8.23/MOUNCE)** *And not only this, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption* (*apolytrōsin* | ἀπολύτρωσιν) *of our bodies.* Paul instructs Christians in a current state of freedom as Justified Saints, how to walk *according to the Spirit* and not according to that sinful nature, or flesh still within themselves. **When we depart from our earthly bodies we graduate from this School with godly instructors like Paul. Then we will need no care regarding sin...there will be none!**

TAKEAWAY #1

Justification is freedom from the penalty of sin. But NOTE THAT most of Paul's letters which call Christians to maturity, such as Ephesians, emphasize that Christians are not free from the power of sin which is inside their mortal bodies. Only a new body, Resurrection from the Dead, will fix that. He instructs Christians how to walk according to the Spirit and not according to that sinful nature, or flesh still within themselves. Don't let anyone tell you that we can not have a positive attitude to leave this life...to leave these sinful bodies. This is not accepting defeat, but belief in our Total Victory in GLORY!

As a Christian matures, and desires a *Closer Walk with Jesus*, thus a more intimate relationship, he begins to care more about God's feelings in a personal way. **God has feelings. His indwelling Spirit feels the way we live the Christian life.** Maturing Christians get more and *more better*, as above in **(Ephesians 4.23/TLB)** *Now your attitudes and thoughts must all be constantly changing for the better.* They learn to **not only do** what pleases God, but also **to feel more what God feels.** Just the thought of making Holy Spirit sad should keep us sensitive to our behaviour. As my wife, Dorothy, who trained horses in America, told me: “Even a horse learns to feel what his master feels, and wants to please his master. He matures into this, away from being wild and willful. He learns with someone on his back, to literally walk *closer with his master.*”

Now connecting these thoughts to today's Message, reading (**Ephesians 4.32/TLB**), *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.* "A Closer Walk with Jesus" results in **feeling** what Holy Spirit feels in our relationships, **the way we treat all people, but especially Christians.** Holy Spirit living inside us, connects God's feeling to His Word in our relationships. This sounds simple, but there are some fellow believers who we have trouble understanding both in how they think, and some of their sinful tendencies that they seem totally unaware of. These saints may truly try your patience! So, Holy Spirit often reminds us, in a very gentle whisper, of the sinful state Jesus found us in, maybe many years ago, as we were being drawn to Jesus, and, God's forgiveness that we were given as the Gift of Salvation...the Gift of Jesus!

So, (**Ephesians 5.1-2**) tells us, *Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

God has given us in Christ the perfect example of Forgiveness. **Forgiveness must be TOTAL FORGIVENESS, or it is not FORGIVENESS AT ALL!** God loved us and Jesus bought our forgiveness. We are not being asked an unreasonable thing to do the same with others. This is what Jesus told His original Apostles as He sent them out to do miracles to the towns that He would visit later in His journeys. We see this in (**Matthew 10.8**) *Heal those who are ill, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. **Freely** you have received; **freely** give.* Every Christian is in that same position to freely give what they have received, including compassionate love and forgiveness.

Often we lack wisdom and understanding. In order to Trust the Lord beyond our own understanding, **we should talk to ourselves, often to preach the Bible verse *Love never Fails (1 Corinthians 13.8)* to our inner-man.** Thus we are choosing to *live a life of love* as in (**Ephesians 5.2**). I clearly recall the respected Pastor who shared this idea of talking to oneself in his sermon years ago in America. It sounds "crazy" until you think and pray about it. It is a very healthy part of the Christian's Life **to talk to yourself.**

Paul now makes it clear that there are some activities that should never be part of ***Living the Christian Life!*** (**Ephesians 5.3**). *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.* Attraction to other people is a gift from our Holy God: to the opposite sex, obviously God's creation towards marriage; to the same sex, God's creation towards brotherly love. Of course, physical attraction is only part of good and holy relationships. Mankind's sin has the

perversion of physical attraction to the same sex being the sin of homosexuality; to the opposite sex, the sin of fornication, sexual intercourse outside of Marriage. The Apostle Paul is not compromising God's standards of holiness. These sexual perversions make God's Holy Spirit sad as in **(Ephesians 4.30/EASY)** *Do not do anything that will make God's Holy Spirit sad.*

Sexual sins are not new, but today our visually animated world of media on television and especially the internet, makes such sins very available to all, and instantly appearing to you without any notice! Paul is instructing Christians that there *not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed*, in a Christian's life, his walk with Jesus. God's indwelling Spirit helps us and directs us away from these sinful actions. However, *not be even a hint of sexual immorality* requires prayer and walking closely with Jesus and telling Him about all our struggles with temptations. Not performing sinful actions must start in the inner man as the Lord Jesus made clear when He said in **(Matthew 5.27-28)** **27** *'You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery."* **28** *But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* **Therefore, Not performing the act in the body does not mean not committing the sin in the heart.** Holy Spirit always alerts Christians when they are tempted by the lust of the eye. It starts in the eyes and the mind. A quick prayer to Jesus will keep it out of the heart. Noticing or feeling attracted to the opposite sex is normal. But, we must not deceive ourselves when we are not willing to accept Holy Spirit's help to not stare unto lust, which is adultery without any physical contact..

TAKEAWAY #2

Our battle with our old sinful nature requires our declaring war on it in prayer and by our determination to persevere in Holy Christian Living. We have the power to crucify our sinful nature, to put it to death, by asking God to nail it to the Cross with His Son. Remember, God is above time and this is a very effective prayer and He will answer it positively. We must not neglect praying such a prayer when temptations are most powerfully pulling at our heart. As in (Colossians 3.5/MOUNCE) *Therefore put to death* {That is to crucify by prayer to God!} *whatever is earthly in you: sexual (porneian | πορνείαν) immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, evil and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Ephesians 5.3). But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.*

or of greed - The New Testament Greek word, πλεονεξία, *pleonexia*, is translated as **greed** in the NIVUK Bible; with the definition in the Greek dictionary in the **(MOUNCE)** Bible: some advantage which one possesses over another; an inordinate desire of riches; covetousness;

grasping; , overreaching; extortion; a gift exacted by importunity and conferred with grudging, a hard-wrung gift; a scheme of extortion, The Lord Jesus' Words are the best to search our hearts for **greed**. For He said in **(Luke 12.15)** *Watch out and be on guard against all types of greed (pleonexias | πλεονεξίας), because one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.*

Paul continues his words of warning in **(Ephesians 5.4)** *Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.* Our desire to bring sinners closer to Jesus may have us listening to their *obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking*, At some point, we have to risk offending them and tell them this talk offends us. For Paul warned the Corinthians of this in **(1Corinthians 15.33)** *Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'* The unclean jokes and foolish talk will too easily stick in our minds.

but rather thanksgiving – Sharing God's blessings in our conversations is a very positive and refreshing form of talking. It need not be only in “religious” activities, as everything in a Christians life is “religious;” but the gift of a good fishing trip, fun playing soccer with your son, finding a new recipe on the internet, or any of the secular activities that **do not make Holy Spirit sad. Holy Spirit is not a spirit of “Gnosticism” and God loves to hear our giving thanks for every part of our life. Gnosticism acknowledges that God is spirit, but teaches that all material things, even human bodies, are evil. Therefore Jesus did not come to Earth in a human body!**

Now the Apostle makes it clear and obvious that taking his teaching serious is a matter of spiritual Life and Death!” In **(Ephesians 5.5-7)** *5 For of this you can be sure: no immoral, impure or greedy person – such a person is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them.* Pastor Bruce, you may ask, what about all those Promises you preached regarding Christians being **The Chosen for Glory in Heaven?** This is a question that I have asked myself, and had Jesus answer it in my life, especially my Experiential Christianity in the Word and the Spirit at seminary in the 1980s. **I have decided to include much in this Message to answer this question, as it is not only a struggle in a sincere Christian's heart, but also, a point in which Satan accuses God of being untrue!**

Now, Remember that last week regarding seeking a “Closer Walk with Jesus” to live a holy Christian Life I said: **“ We do have the responsibility to exercise our will, the will we did not even have as sinners, which at first was to walk toward God, and away from Satan and sin; and now, to continue in that direction. That job is on us!** That statement holds the key to

my answer about Christians living *immoral, impure or greedy* lives losing their Salvation. We must emphasize what is **our job and what is God's job.**

Anyone who loves Jesus exercises their will to stay in close relationship with Him. Yes, they do it imperfectly. But God is not a hard taskmaster!...He sees the heart more than the PERFECT performance. Staying in a Lifestyle that the Christian knows is *immoral, impure or greedy* is an intentional ACT OF THE WILL. Thus they will be willfully throwing away their *inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God* for the pleasure of their sins. Any of us can backslide into poorer holy living in a heartbeat, but continuing in such a lifestyle against Paul's exhortation in Ephesians, and the Holy Bible in many passages, is an ACT OF THE WILL against God. This hurts Jesus and causes sadness and sorrow in Holy Spirit. Continuing willful sin will be the Christians throwing away their Salvation and forcing God to close the door to Heaven! After a Christian has been convinced **of any willful sinful behavior**, he repents and prays for God's Help with a humble attitude. It may be a short prayer, or in detail, toward God's Mercy Seat as King David did in **(Psalm 51.1-2)**. *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.*

The kind of sin that I think is best described as an iniquity, that a Christian is more likely to do, but only after the fact realizes it was sin, should also be confessed. The **(NASB/1995) Bible has the appropriate sub-title for these verses: The Conflict of Two Natures**, the focus of much of my current Message for Ephesians. This is the sinful behavior as described in length by Paul in **(Romans 7. 14-8.1)** *For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. 16 But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. 17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. 19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. 21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. 8.1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who*

are in Christ Jesus. **2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. Any and every sin, willful or not willful, sent Jesus to The Cross. We can see the emotional content in Paul's description of **(Romans 7) sin in his analogy of his sin to the body of this death. This was actually the example in Jerusalem of a dead body tied to the back of Roman prisoners to cause a disgusting slow death from disease!**

Now, Any prayer from the heart will restore and keep the Relationship with Jesus strong, and by God's grace to His Chosen, Holy Spirit will cleanse **(Romans 7)** sins, and also cleanse willful sins and turn the Christian's will back toward living the Christian Holy Life, *A Closer Walk With Jesus.*

TAKEAWAY#3

Christians learn soon after rebirth that the battle against their old sinful nature is real and threatens their relationship with God through Jesus. Continuing in Willful Sinning against God is actually throwing away Eternal Life for the pleasure of sin and loving this corrupt world more than Jesus. Holy Spirit convinces all Christians of their sin so that any prayer from the heart will restore and keep the Relationship with Jesus strong. So by God's grace to His Chosen, Holy Spirit will cleanse (Romans 7) unwillful sins, and also cleanse willful sins and turn the Christian's will back toward loving Jesus and living the Christian Holy Life, A Closer Walk With Jesus.

(Ephesians 5.8-10) *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. Without minimizing any confidence that God has built up in you as a Soldier of Jesus, it is good to remember the Older Testament Scripture reminding the Israelites delivered from slavery in Egypt of the danger of prosperity in (Deuteronomy 8.12-14/TLB) 12-13 For when you have become full and prosperous and have built fine homes to live in, and when your flocks and herds have become very large, and your silver and gold have multiplied, 14 that is the time to watch out that you don't become proud and forget the Lord your God who brought you out of your slavery in the land of Egypt.* The famous American Pioneer Pastor to the gangs in New York City, David Wilkerson, paraphrased this into: "Remember all the way that the Lord has brought you, lest your heart be lifted up." All of us Christians *were once darkness, , but now {we} are light in the Lord.* We were led out of our spiritual Egypt of darkness and made prosperous by God's gift of Faith. Jesus' death on the Cross took away our sins and also gave us a new nature, even a nature like His, transformed us from darkness to be *children of light.* Paul is reminding Christians to live what they are, *light in the Lord.* As Christians stay willing to do so, Holy Spirit will cause His Fruit to happen: **(Ephesians 5.9)** *(for the fruit of the light consists in all*

goodness, righteousness and truth) And (**Ephesians 5.10**) says: *and find out what pleases the Lord.* As I said last week, in our strength alone, living the Holy Christian Life is **Mission IMPOSSIBLE.** But, *What is impossible with man is possible with God* from (**Luke 18.27**). **Experiential Christianity is not just a life of trial and error, like a research scientist working in his laboratory! But, without choosing sin as an ingredient in our experiment, it is still much like that. We are sheep, and compared to other animals, rather “dumb.” But, we have the Greatest Shepherd on Earth, now in Heaven at the right Hand of All Power. His Rod and Staff comforts us sheep (Psalm 23.4). So the instruction to find out what pleases the Lord is a process.** God's character of mercy, patience, and love beyond measure..makes the impossible become an experience full of joy! ...And, yes, often much sorrow as well. Jesus had His Gethsemane; we might too. I plan to make this a main part of a Message in November titled, “My Jesus, As Thou Wilt.”

(**Ephesians 5.11-12**) says, *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness (Greek New Testament - σκότος , skotos), but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. Skotos* refers to the spiritual realm of dark (Satan) against the realm of Light (God). As in the Lord Jesus' entrance into the world in (**John 1.4-5**) **4** *In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness (skotos), and the darkness (skotos) has not overcome it.* And also in Jesus revealing Paul his calling as a Believer in Jesus, his Messiah in (Acts 26.16-18): **16** *“Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. 17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”* Although the emphasis in these recently quoted verses in Ephesians are to avoid evil pleasures, we must remember that Satan tempts Christian's flesh by the *sins that feel good!* As (**Ephesians 5.11/TLB**) **11** *Take no part in the worthless pleasures of evil and darkness, but instead, rebuke and expose them.* My message covering the *Whole Armor of God* against Satan in Ephesians Chapter 6 will have more specifics. But, the following example of “Magic Shows” in the church shows how darkness is always attempting to *overcome the Light* even here in Osaka.

Recently I was approached by a missionary evangelistic group requesting an evangelistic service at OIC. The main focus of their message was presenting the Gospel through a Magic Show. Very quickly the OIC Council agreed with my request to respond NO. One of the Council members quoted many Bible verses condemning magic, sorcery, and other dark practices. Before my rebirth in Christ I had a heart of a sorcerer. Having been a practicing astrologer, I am very aware of the power of the devil via the occult. I thought that I was a Christian because I knew

Jesus was real. Once Satan came to me personally and offered me supernatural powers, I said NO, by the seeds planted in me in Sunday School as a child! The next 6 months were what some may call “Hell on Earth,” but eventually God showed up. After my rebirth, the Lord Jesus did tell me that my sin from astrology that I was responsible for, was done in ignorance. But my heart of a sorcerer was the underneath cause leading to Satan's personal and powerful advance. Jesus proved this with supernatural signs in deliverance, the Gift of salvation, and the Gift to Rightly Divide the Word of God which I had never read before....all at once.

Also, I know that the concept that “the hand is quicker than the eye” is not spiritual in itself. But, even if the “magic” is only that, it overshadows the true Power of God's Spirit to sinners. Sinners in Japan especially would seem to be accepting Christ's Gospel because of the “tricks!” they saw with their eyes. The OIC Council Member had sent me (**Colossians 2.8**) along with Older Testament verses. This applies to a “magic show” that may only be “the hand is quicker than the eye.” (**Colossians 2.8/AMPC**) says this clearly: *See to it that no one carries you off as spoil or makes you yourselves captive by his so-called philosophy and intellectualism and vain deceit (idle fancies and plain nonsense), following human tradition (men's ideas of the material rather than the spiritual world), just crude notions following the rudimentary and elemental teachings of the universe and disregarding [the teachings of] Christ (the Messiah).* So OIC said no to the “Magic Show” evangelist as in (**Ephesians 5.11**) and (**Colossians 2.8**) *but rather expose them.*

Here is another instructive event in my Experiential Christian Walk. Just last week I wrote to explain and apologize to an American non-Christian what seemed to her as demanding agreement in my religion for a friendship with a mutual Japanese friend we share. She had just returned from Kyoto to her home in Boston USA. I said to my American friend: “**There is a typhoon, Shanshan, approaching Japan. If those who knew about it told nobody else, would that seem okay?** We Christians know that the Bible is true and tells all people that 'It's appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment!' I asked our Japanese friend directly about her willingness to accept Jesus in 2016, after a mutual and unconditional friendship since 1996. Because we love her we wanted to be sure she was warned, like a typhoon coming, to make a decision to avoid God's judgment.” Praise God! **He amazed me.** This American friend in Boston respected my attitude and wants to stay friends with Dorothy and I and keep reading our Newsletters. If I were too careful with her, fearful of offending, this opportunity would have ended with a **closed door!** If the sinners in the world would meet Satan face to face as I did, I expect many more would call on Jesus as I did! That is why here in Japan the devil stays somewhat undercover despite the outward occult and pagan activities in Shinto and Buddhism shrines, temples, and festivals. Paul seemed to agree with me for he said in (**Ephesians 5.13-14**) *But everything exposed by the light becomes*

visible – and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. 14 This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

TAKEAWAY#4

A Closer Walk with Jesus in the Christian Life increases our responsibility for the sinners around us. We are not loving them to allow them to live in ignorance, Satan wants that! We became Christians because someone warned us by sharing Jesus' Gospel. We are expected to find ways to warn and instruct sinners in love according to our individual gifts and abilities.

These instructions in these passages of Ephesians teach us that if we are to continue a **Closer Walk with Jesus** we will be more alert to the good and evil in the world around us. We become more responsible to act and react in ways that please God. Holy Spirit makes sure that our confidence and Experiential Christianity has prepared us before we face the next challenge.

Let Us Pray...

REFERENCES

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