

**SERMON: Tithes plus Offerings: A Christians' Service**

**SERMON: Life Expands with Courage**

**GOOD Morning OIC & Welcome to Father's House**

**For over a year in my Messages I have attempted to bring out the Bible meanings with series of sermons from Romans, Ephesians, and 1<sup>st</sup> John. A brief overview:**

**ROMANS**

**Declares and details the main Theme of Christianity: 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 forgiveness. Christians have their sin problem healed and are therefore more than conquerors against all spiritual enemies. They have power to continue the work that Jesus started to seek and save lost sinners.**

**EPHESIANS**

**According to God's eternal, loving plan, He directs, carries out, and sustains our salvation. Paul describes that Christians need to live as Citizens Already In Heaven, and that God has given more than they need to succeed: The Glory of His Grace, His undeserved "favor." The Church is the Community of Believers in God's Family by faith. With privileges, come family responsibilities: to live with Christ's Standards and accept praying on the Armor of God to battle Evil for the sake of the Family, the Church and its Mission.**

**THE FIRST LETTER OF THE APOSTLE JOHN**

**I emphasized that all of us Christians need to ask God for a Closer Walk with Jesus for "Walking with Jesus is Walking in the Light." Jesus Christ commanded Believers to love each other as He loved them. This love is evidence and proof that they are "true" Christians. John compared this with the "false Christians" who were believing Gnosticism. That is an Anti-Christ religion. Jesus is Lord and in control of Heaven and Earth. Believers in Him can have Blessed Assurance of their eternal destiny.**

Today I start my next series, the Book of Joshua from the Older Testament. Osaka International Church is in a critical crisis right now. Many members have left OIC for churches which they feel are not in crisis. Those who have run away seem to expect total failure of the pastor and the faithful church members. They expect OIC to close its doors in 2026.

Please allow me to tell you an historical event centered in the United States. This event captured the hearts of the whole world ---

In 1971 three American astronauts were about to die in a spacecraft that had been headed for a landing on the moon. A technical disaster had occurred. A routine stir of an oxygen tank ignited damaged wire insulation inside it, causing an explosion that vented the contents of both of the service module's oxygen tanks to space. This forced the crew into the smaller reentry module with smaller oxygen tanks. The astronauts' death seemed certain for not only insufficient air to breath but also the loss of the air filtering system of the air. Gene Kranz, the Apollo 13 Mission Flight Director, was hearing many people predicting the failure of this mission, Apollo 13, and of NASA itself. He made this public statement. "I believe this will be our finest hour. We will prevail and these men will not die. NOT ON MY WATCH!"

Amazing ingenuity of the engineers on the ground invented an air cleaner - scrubber system from duct tape and various things in the spacecraft. This was God's mercy. For the whole world began to pray. The story unfolded on international television. God intervened and the *impossible became reality* as the three astronauts were home safely in six days.

I agree with Gene Kranz's attitude in crisis and surrounding criticism predicting defeat. I believe this will be OIC's FINEST HOUR. I see God's love flowing down from Heaven upon us at OIC until it bursts out our doors to reach a dying city, Osaka.

Let us begin.....no. Continue in the Word and the Spirit...

## **JOSHUA'S MISSION IMPOSSIBLE**

Reading (**Joshua 1. 1**) *1 After the death of Moses the Lord's servant, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant. Joshua was facing the recent death of his mentor. Moses not only taught Joshua, but showed God's supernatural vindication and proofs of Moses' call to lead Israel out of Egyptian slavery into the Promised Land of Canaan.*

Next in (**Joshua 1.2**) *He said, 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. Joshua*

must have felt not ready to lead a community of many thousands of people. God did not ask Joshua's permission to assign him his “Mission Impossible calling!” It gets more impossible but with God's Promises next in **(Joshua 1.3-4)**:

*3 I promise you what I promised Moses: ‘Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you— 4 from the Negev wilderness in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north, from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, including all the land of the Hittites.’* God tells Joshua that His Promises to Moses have not died with his teacher. God repeats them to Joshua and with more details of geography. Joshua sat at the edge of the Jordan River, the gate to Canaan. The Lord is really saying: “Just get your feet in the land, and I will do the supernatural to cause great victory for you, Joshua!”

**(Joshua 1.5):** *5 No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you.* We must remember that God had given these sinful peoples in Canaan many years to repent. These lands were infested with idol worship and despicable practices including sacrificing their children to idols. They were ripe for God's Judgment. That meant Israel invading Canaan as warriors for God. Before Jesus' sacrifice for sin, the only way to get rid of such gross sin, was to get rid of the sinner. This meant the total extinction of the Canaanite people by God's Righteous Judgment. Yet, we will see that at least one sinner's heart was hungry for a righteous God. This was the prostitute Rahab as we will read in **Joshua Chapter 2**. She would actually appear in Jesus' family line and marry a godly man. She kept following the true God. She also is listed in the Bible's heroes of the Faith in **(Hebrews 11.31)** *It was by faith that **Rahab** the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.* Rahab had courage as she put her faith in the true God of Israel.

Next, God commands Joshua to have *courage* in **(Joshua 1.6):** *6 “Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them.* Although God commanded Joshua to *Be strong and courageous*, courage is often harder to find in our hearts than strength in our bodies. But faith says that God never commands anything that He will not cause to happen if we trust Him. Joshua did!

Repetition is a good teacher. For God says again in **(Joshua 1.7a)** *7 Be strong and very courageous.* Next God instructs Joshua of his spiritual responsibility in addition to warfare against the Canaanites. In **(Joshua 1.7b):** *Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do.* God would enable Joshua to fight a truly *holy war* against flesh and blood.

But He reminded Joshua that holiness must begin in his heart, not just in his sword! If he obeyed Moses' instructions, God would cause his success!

Joshua's life was expanding OUTWARD as his courage increased to accept God's command and challenge. Joshua's heart of love for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob opened the channel of receiving what God promised him. Joshua showed this love and faith in God when only he and Caleb gave a good report, the minority report, when the Israelite men returned from exploring the land of the Canaanites to conquer.

This is recorded in (**Numbers 13 & 14**).

### **TWELVE SCOUTS EXPLORE CANAAN**

**13.1***The LORD now said to Moses, 2 “Send out men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the Israelites. Send one leader from each of the twelve ancestral tribes.”*

**(Numbers 13. 27-28, 30-33)** *This was their report to Moses: “We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. 28 But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak! 30 But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. “Let’s go at once to take the land,” he said. “We can certainly conquer it!”*

**31** *But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. “We can’t go up against them! They are stronger than we are!” 32 So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: “The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. 33 We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that’s what they thought, too!”*

### **The People Rebel**

**(Numbers 14.1-12)** *1 Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. 2 Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. “If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!” they complained. 3 “Why is the LORD taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn’t it be better for us to return to Egypt?” 4 Then they plotted among themselves, “Let’s choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!” 5 Then Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel. 6 Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing. 7 They said to all the people of Israel, “The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! 8 And if the LORD is*

*pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. 9 Do not rebel against the LORD, and don't be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the LORD is with us! Don't be afraid of them!"*

*10 But the whole community began to talk about stoning Joshua and Caleb. Then the glorious presence of the LORD appeared to all the Israelites at the Tabernacle. 12 I will disown them and destroy them with a plague. Then I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they are!"*

### **MOSES ARGUES WITH GOD TO SPARE THE PEOPLE**

**(Numbers 14.15-16)** *15 Now if you slaughter all these people with a single blow, the nations that have heard of your fame will say, 16 'The LORD was not able to bring them into the land he swore to give them, so he killed them in the wilderness*

**Then God's anger burned against such unbelief in His Chosen people. He swore that all the men who spoke such unbelief depending on their human strength for victory, not the Almighty God of Israel. These men would all die in the 40 years of punishment in the wilderness...except Caleb and Joshua. They had spoken words of courage and faith in God. We see after Moses argued and convinced the Lord to spare the people in (Numbers 14.20-23):**  
*20 Then the LORD said, "I will pardon them as you have requested. 21 But as surely as I live, and as surely as the earth is filled with the LORD's glory, 22 not one of these people will ever enter that land. They have all seen my glorious presence and the miraculous signs I performed both in Egypt and in the wilderness, but again and again they have tested me by refusing to listen to my voice. 23 They will never even see the land I swore to give their ancestors. None of those who have treated me with contempt will ever see it.*

**God rewarded Joshua's love and faith in Him with survival and success as the Leader of Israel to enter the Promised Land, Canaan.**

Reading **(Joshua 1.9-11)** *9 This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." 10 Joshua then commanded the officers of Israel, 11 "Go through the camp and tell the people to get their provisions ready. In three days you will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you."*

God is above time! He saw the battles and defeats that would be in Joshua's life after he accepted God's Command. God again repeats the Promise of Power in His Command: *—be strong and*

*courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*” Joshua knew that despite his human frailties- No One beats God! Unlike the unbelieving scouts, Joshua depended on God's infinite strength, not his own. Faith in God's Promise of constant fellowship, a relationship like Moses had, moved Joshua to go forward.

*Do not be afraid or discouraged* – **When fear comes in...faith goes out!**

**Joshua responds in faith and love. We must never think that the warriors for God, the men of faith, in the Older Testament were seeking self glory. They were totally committed to pour out their lives to give God glory.**

**(Joshua 1.10-11)** *10 Joshua then commanded the officers of Israel, 11 “Go through the camp and tell the people to get their provisions ready. In three days you will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you.”* Joshua's life expanded from being stuck on the wrong side of the Jordan River to taking command to lead the Israelites to war against overwhelming odds...humanly speaking!

## **CHRISTIANS TODAY AS MODERN JOSHUAS IN JOSHUA CHAPTER 1 from VERSES-**

**Joshua 1.2 - the death of Moses** – I know fine Christians who had their faith shaken when their human teacher graduates to Heaven or is led out of their lives. This is a human reaction but must be prayed away. Christians must never say to themselves: “I am only human!” For we are Children of God becoming immortal Sons of God!

- *the time has come for you to lead these people,* Dear OIC Saints, I am having special discipleship classes for men who want to go deeper into the Word of God, and learn to be leaders for Jesus. The Women's Fellowship Meetings on Sundays by Dorothy and possibly a weekly midweek Women's Bible Study will allow similar opportunities for OIC women. We are an international church. But, our Japanese members are challenged in special ways. It seems without question that Japanese churches throughout this great nation die for lack of male leadership. Female leadership is fine but a healthy church supports the Biblical teaching of male as the head of the family. Children of all cultures need to see male leadership in the local church. I see OIC with leaders from all cultures stepping up to lead and follow from hearts of love for Jesus, our Leader.

**JOSHUA 1.3 - I promise you what I promised Moses-** Victory over all God's enemies. Moses , as all Christians, was on the Lord's side. Thus, God's enemies were his as well. Israel fought Canaanites. Christians fight their sinful nature and the devil. God has promised in the Book of Romans: **Christians have their sin problem healed and are therefore more than conquerors**

**against all spiritual enemies. They have power to continue the work that Jesus started to seek and save lost sinners., (Romans 8.31-34)** *31 What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? 32 Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? 33 Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. 34 Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.*

**Joshua 1.5** - *No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you – Jesus walks with us throughout our whole life on earth. In my messages from John's First Letter I emphasized that all of us Christians need to ask God for a Closer Walk with Jesus for “Walking with Jesus is Walking in the Light.” As He was with Moses, so Jesus is with us. As Jesus promises us in (1 John 1.3) We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

**Joshua 1.7b** *Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. Dear OIC Saints, our Mentor and Teacher Jesus died, like Moses, but unlike Moses, Jesus rose again. He lives forevermore! His instructions for our holiness of heart are emphasized by the Apostle John in his First Letter. We Christians are thus reminded of Jesus' Command in (1 John 3.23): And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. Joshua followed his teacher, Moses, to love God and God's people. Our Teacher Jesus has commanded us to do the same. But God has given us His own Spirit as our Helper to obey Jesus' command. Thus we know that the promise of Jesus in (Matthew 11.30) is also true: For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”*

## **GOD'S COMMAND TO ZERUBBABEL – BE STRONG**

**(Haggai 2.1-5)** *the LORD sent another message through the prophet Haggai. 2 “Say this to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of God's people there in the land: 3 ‘Does anyone remember this house—this Temple—in its former splendor? How, in comparison, does it look to you now? It must seem like nothing at all! 4 But now the LORD says: Be strong, Zerubbabel. Be strong, Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people still left in the land. And now get to work, for I am with you, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. 5 My Spirit remains among you, just as I promised when you came out of Egypt. So do not be afraid.’*

Unlike Joshua, the people of God at the time of Haggai have a different challenge. They have just returned from exile in Babylonia for 70 years. Their leader, Zerubbabel, was inspired. But many of the older Israelites remembered the splendor of Solomon's Temple before it was destroyed by the Armies of the Babylonians led by Nebuchadnezzar. The condition of the rebuilt Temple was disappointing!

Joshua's life expanded with God's command to have **courage and conquer**. *Zerubbabel* needed *courage* for his life to expand from a captive governor of Judah to a Leader for Reviving God's Glory. The Israelites from Judah were punished for years of idolatry and persecuting and killing God's prophets. *This is what the Lord says: "You will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again.* This was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet in **(Jeremiah 29.10)**. Thus *Zerubbabel* was God's appointed leader to *rebuild* Jerusalem and the Temple for God with a disheartened people. As for battles against discouragement, rebuilding is in many ways more difficult. These people had shown repentance for their sins. **Sometimes even Christians find it hard to forgive themselves and believe God's Promises are still for them. This is their mind, not their loving Lord's.** With love and forgiveness in His heart, God's command comes to His leader *Zerubbabel and all the people to Be strong, And now get to work.*

**It is note worthy that God promised His Presence!**

**I believe that there are no great men of God. There only men who find a greater faith in the Greatness of God.** God gave all His leaders the one an only reason to **have courage and be strong**. He said to Moses, and Joshua and Zerubbabel in **(Haggai 2.4-5)** *for I am with you, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. 5 My Spirit remains among you, just as I promised when you came out of Egypt. So do not be afraid.'*

There is no source of strength and courage that matches simple fellowship and friendship with the Almighty God, the Father and His Son, Jesus! There is no other reason or blessing that moves a Believer to give his all to His God than this fellowship.

*5 My Spirit remains among you, just as I promised when you came out of Egypt. So do not be afraid.'* God emphasized also the nature of His Presence in **(Haggai 2.5)** *My Spirit remains among you, just as I promised when you came out of Egypt. So do not be afraid.'* It was by God's Spirit that the Red Sea split for the Israelites to escape. Then the Army of Pharaoh was drowned as the waters closed in. Enemy armies that outnumbered the Israelite Soldiers were destroyed not just by the sword, but by miracles of lightning, plagues, even hornets attacking them. God is supernatural and He wanted them to remember it was not just Moses, but God Himself that

orchestrated their deliverance. He wanted them to believe He would do so again as they returned from the Exile after 70 years.

### **ZERUBBABEL – AND TODAY'S CHRISTIANS AT OIC --- BE STRONG**

Many churches all around the world have not recovered the membership numbers since the COVID plague. We all can look back to large movements of God for church growth. I became a Christian in America during the *Jesus Movement*. Churches sprung up all across America. Seminaries expanded as men and women answered the Call of God on their hearts. That is no longer the reality in my previous home.

It is good to want church growth. For this means more sinners are rescued from God's coming Judgment. Church growth also means Christians enjoy a *Closer Walk with Jesus*. Yet it is vital and important that we recall that of the Million Israelites who escaped from Egypt only three: Moses, Caleb and Joshua *kept the faith* when they saw the Impossible Mission before them. These three were the remnant that were empowered by God's Spirit to reach the Jordan River into Canaan. Similarly, the heart of faith of Zerubbabel and others like Nehemiah, refused to shrink back at rebuilding Jerusalem the city and God's temple. A glorious and splendid Temple in the rebuilding by Zerubbabel was not as important to our God as the hearts of those leaders. They refused to bow their knees to idols, or to forget His faithfulness.

They pleased God by their faith and love towards Him before the resulting numbers of defeated foes or rebuilding happened. OICers can look back on more prosperous days here; but, Jesus has asked us to *follow Him forward*.

### **LIFE SHRINKS AND EXPANDS IN PROPORTION TO OUR COURAGE**

Joshua and Zerubbabel prevailed because of their love and faith in God, not in themselves. New Testament Believers in Jesus have more secured promises. Maybe we have not seen the miracles of the Red Sea opening or the amazing release of captive Israel from Babylon after 70 years of captivity. But each of us has seen our lives transformed when God's Spirit opened our hearts to trust in Jesus. Our sin problem is solved as we saw in the Book of Romans. We stand as righteous men and women before a Holy God. We call Him Father and He calls us His beloved Children. He has directed us to this glorious salvation from eternity past as we saw in the Book of Ephesians. We can live as Citizens already of Heaven, for in Christ God calls us *already there*. OIC and all churches are a Community with power to live with Christ's Standards. We all can take up the Armor of God and defeat the plans of Hell against our family and Neighbors in Osaka. John the Apostle has given us Blessed Assurance as true Christians: *We walk with Jesus*. Our walk

with Jesus causes us to love each other as Jesus commanded us. Jesus is the *Lord of heaven and Earth* and our everlasting destiny has been secured by God.

Jesus is calling on us, like Joshua, to conquer new territory here in Osaka. He also is asking us to work, as Zerubbabel, and believe God for a more splendid Church in the days ahead.

I, your pastor, **believe this will be OIC's FINEST HOUR.** I see God's love flowing down from Heaven upon us at OIC until it bursts out our doors to reach a dying city, Osaka. Let us continue and at the same time start anew. God is not discouraged by our challenges. We were delivered from bondage of our Egypt of sin by Jesus. It is time to build anew, remembering that the Spirit who brought us out of our Egypt is still right here! We must not let fear drive faith out of our hearts of love towards Jesus. God's faithfulness is spoken: in **(Haggai 2.5)** *My Spirit remains among you, just as I promised when you came out of Egypt. So do not be afraid.* Yes, Life shrinks and expands according to our courage! This is by His Spirit who remains in the hearts of God's People. Let's ask for courage and believe together!

*Let Us Pray,*

## REFERENCES

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