

SERMON: DEDICATED SERVICE AND LIVING SACRIFICES**GOOD Morning OIC and Welcome to Father's House, ,**

This morning I am returning to the Book of Romans to focus on a Christian's service for Jesus. To show that it requires an attitude of being a *Living Sacrifice*. In my last Message titled: **Will “Your Time Come” This Year?** I showed how the Bible removes all the mystery about death. I also showed that the Bible tells us that God's Love of a Christian once he has been Born-Again is not *Unconditional*. A sinner is born again by belief in Jesus' sacrificial death on His Cross. This is for sure God's unconditional love and regarding works, a gift. The sinner did no good work or religious activity to deserve Salvation by Faith. The Apostle Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus made this clear in **(Ephesians 2.8-9) 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, 9 not of works, so that no one should boast.** In today's Message, however, I will tie together the truths from the Bible of God's Unconditional Love unto Salvation, called Justification; with God's Conditional Love-*living Sacrifices* and *Brotherly love*, called Sanctification. Actually Justification and Sanctification have to live together in a Christian's life.

GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE UNTO SALVATION

In my Romans 12 Message in April 2024 I preached: **“JUSTIFICATION is the declaration by God that we are no longer guilty but we are made righteous on the basis of Jesus’ death on The Cross to buy OUR eternal forgiveness. OUR JUSTIFICATION is according to God's Plan: Before Time Began - In Time - After Time is No More, as revealed in the Bible. The Book of Romans also declares that God, the Sovereign King of the Universe, has placed salvation of all men in the Word and also in the hands of His Chosen, the Church.....And, today, we will see more details of how Paul describes that Christians who are Justified by Faith and who follow Jesus will be lead to Dedicated Service as *Living Sacrifices*, that is as Sanctified Believers.**

Therefore God's continuing love is now shown in the Believer's life by His leading them. As the Psalmist said in (Psalm 23.3) *He restores my soul;He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*” God is patient and kind to all His Children; but, Jesus' demand for following Him is still true. In **(Matthew 16.24)** it reads: *Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone will*

come after Me, let him deny himself, and take **up his cross**, and follow Me. As we follow Jesus, we are sanctified, that is set apart and made new in His image unto His Glory and good works.

In **(Romans 12.1-2)** it says, *I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* God is asking us to present ourselves to Him as sacrifices. When we are truly in awe or reverential fear of our God, and the Sacrifice of His Son, Jesus, we feel honored that God would call us to follow in Jesus' sacrificial footsteps. Jesus is the One who sacrificed His Life on the Cross for us. God's plan is to make all Christians more like Jesus as they follow Jesus to Heaven, our **final** Sanctification. This means accepting sacrificial living to walk close to Jesus.

Now, a few words on *sacrifice*. Let us look at the first sacrifice of an animal to God. This was by Adam and Eve's second son, Abel in **(Genesis 4.3-4)** *3 In the course of time Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. 4 Abel also brought the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had respect for Abel and for his offering,*

About 5,000 years after Abel, the next recorded animal sacrifice to the LORD was by Noah.

Noah's ark that survived the worldwide Flood, was resting on a mountain, and when Noah saw that the ground was dry; he left his famous vessel. We read in **(Genesis 8.18-20)** *18 So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. 19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark. Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.* It is not unlikely that Noah remembered the godly men in his family tree who kept the history since the Garden of Eden alive in their stories. If so, Noah quickly identified with Abel and did likewise. God accepted Noah's animal sacrifice and was glad that He had given Noah the mercy to continue the Human Race! We see in **(Genesis 8.21)**: *21 The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done."* That was by the Worldwide Flood.

Note that Paul knew that the Roman Christians needed "*the mercies of God*" to be **ABLE** to obey this request to be *Living Sacrifices*. We also are so needy of God's mercies. I have a joke a pastor told me about **(Romans 12.1)**. It sounds "funny" but has a true and serious meaning to it. Feel free to laugh...and then realize it describes our inconsistent obedience to our wonderful Saviour and God. The joke or play on words is: **"The trouble with Living Sacrifices" is that they keep**

crawling off the altar!” Well, we do. We often look for any easier way out of following Jesus than *to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice.* But *by the mercies of God* the Holy Spirit helps us back onto the Altar. For it is on the Altar that we grow close to Jesus and find the joy of living for Him.

Pastor Bruce, God is asking me to be a sacrifice? **YES!** Some popular translations of (**Romans 12.1**) in the Newer Testament say “*this is your spiritual service of worship.*” These miss the important word “reasonable” as an important stress on this verse. The original Greek Text (**Romans 12.1/MOUNCE**) *I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God—this is a reasonable (logikos) act of worship for you.* This Greek word is the root of the English word “logical.” **YES?** We should see our being *Living sacrifices as a reasonable and logical* request by the God who gave His Son as the Sacrifice to save our souls.

TAKEAWAY #1

Living in AWE of the God of all mercy is the basis of “Dedicated Service.” This life of AWE frees us to offer ourselves completely to God through Jesus.

Next, Paul writes in (**Romans 12.2**) *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.....* This sounds simple, but it is definitely not easy. The ruler of this world, the Devil, tries to put pressure on Christian's to be conformed *or molded* against the mold we are in, in Christ. God is constantly reshaping us to become *Sons of God.* God's Spirit keeps making us more like Jesus. Temptations for obvious sins may be aimed at us, but it is usually the everyday **weariness of our faithful Walk to Glory** that can make us putty in the *wrong hands, the world's pressures, and Satan's evil suggestions.* Back in the 1970's we young Believers in Jesus sang this short song based on Romans 12.2...

Don't let the world form you into its mold

Until you're tired and weary and about to lose hold

It's your whole way of seeing things that needs changing round

You need God's perspective down here on the ground.

God's perspective or seeing things as He sees things is the next part of the verse in (**Romans 12.2b**) *but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* God causes our minds to be renewed! Our activities to encourage Him to renew our minds include: time alone with Jesus; continuing in prayer while walking through our everyday jobs; and fellowship with Christians. God thus continues His mercy to us. He hasn't changed His desire to keep us in His Hand, and renew us *over and over*

and over...until Glory! The results are always worth facing the challenge, sooner or later, as in **(Romans 12.2b)** *so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*” Thus *Living Sacrifice Christians* will know clearly before Glory in Heaven that they are walking in God's Will here on Earth!

The Amplified Bible **has some powerful descriptive words of amplification that are true to this Bible verse: (Romans 12.2/AMP)** *And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed and progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you].”*

AMPLIFIED DESCRIPTIONS include - 1) not to be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs]. Every society on Earth has *superficial values and customs* which it calls normal which oppose the WORD and SPIRIT of GOD. All Christians the world around struggle to know how much of their culture they grew up in as children opposes God. But I pray earnestly, that Holy Spirit will show any **sins of culture** to all the World's Cultures here at Osaka International Church. But God didn't give the Church the Bible for any Society or Culture to write over **it with the writings of culture, any culture!** If we don't make the Bible and the voice of the Holy Spirit the FINAL and ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY in our lives, we shouldn't wonder why Satan often chews on us Christians like a MacDonald's Burger!

Never forget that the goal or final destination is Glory in Heaven; but, as we see here in the next verse, there are rewards on earth when we walk close to our Lord.

AMPLIFIED DESCRIPTIONS include - so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you].”

There is nothing quite as satisfying, and peaceful as KNOWING GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE IN A PERSONAL WAY! This is truly a taste of God's Glory on Earth. It is always *good, acceptable, and perfect* and will clarify His unique and singular plan for your life. Thus the Bible tells us if we are aimed to Glory in Heaven, as *Living Sacrifices*, that we will also taste God's Glory on Earth.

TAKEAWAY #2

Christians who are willing to present themselves to God as *Living Sacrifices* receive the Glory on Earth of more of His Presence and truly Knowing His Will for them. They experience (Colossians 1.10) that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing to all, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God,

LIVING SACRIFICES HAVE CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S GIFTS-YET THEY STAY HUMBLE.

Next Paul reminds us that we depend on God's mercy to begin our Life in Christ and for Him to give each a measure of faith as in **(Romans 12.3)** *3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sound judgment, according to the measure of faith God has distributed to every man.* Now the Apostle Paul reminds the Roman Believers, to be sure that they heard God telling them what gifting and calling He has given them before they get too or overly *confident*. All Christians need to stay aware of what *God has allotted to each {of us personally} a measure of faith*. This Bible verse may be difficult for young Christians. But maturity in Christ includes God's causing you to be *confident in Christ* according to God's will; this may be **not yet your own will**. This is really a large part of the definition, if you please, of Christian maturity.

The thing implied in **(Romans 12.3)** *not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment,* ... is also not to think **too lowly of himself either!** This is possible by hearing from the **WORD and the SPIRIT** what *measure of faith* God has really given to you. Because it is our job to seek Jesus daily and it is God's job to keep your faith growing, we find this a fluid, or ever changing, but exciting part of the Christian life. Jesus told how God causes a Christian's faith to grow. We can't make our faith grow only by our own will. For Jesus said in **(Luke 13.20-21): 20** *Again He said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? 21 It is like yeast, which a woman took and hid in sixty pounds of meal until all of it was leavened."*

With leaven in it, the bread "grows." Thus our faith is challenged to grow. God causes it to grow often beyond our understanding for many periods of time as we keep the faith. That faith He gave us is the leaven planted in the flour {of our hearts}. ... God will do more than His share of causing our faith to grow as we keep believing and seeking Jesus and God's will for each of our lives. Paul knew that God would fulfill a new or mature Christian's desire to know His will for his life. **As time passes in the Christian's walk, each of us will get to know better the details of his own "measure" in (Romans 12.3) as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.**

BIBLE BASED UNITY IN THE CHURCH

Next, Paul emphasizes the "Team or united attitude" in the Church, the Body of Christ on Earth. **(Romans 12.4-5)** *4 For just as we have many parts in one body, and not all parts have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and all are parts of one another.* All Christians are connected in Christ and thus are together the *Body of Christ* on Earth now. Only Born Again Christians can have this supernatural "**unity.**" **It is not with our family by natural**

birth, or our community, our nation; but only with brothers and sisters in Christ by supernatural rebirth, believing in Jesus. Again, in **(Romans 12.4-5/AMP)** *For just as in one [physical] body we have many parts, and these parts do not all have the same function or special use, 5 so we, who are many, are [nevertheless just] one body in Christ, and individually [we are] parts one of another [mutually dependent on each other].* Like the human body is connected to function at its best, Christians are dependent on each other. For any local church to bear much fruit for God's Kingdom, there must be a *commitment to that Local Church as one's Home Church.* Fellowship with many Christians around town or around the world is good, but it will not create a local church that bears fruit for Jesus. Only fellowship in the local church with each member realizing and learning that we are **[mutually dependent on each other]** will create the joy and peace of this dependence. **OUCH & AMEN....**this often means conflict with others. Unless we risk conflict in our Local Church we will not grow as the Local Body of Christ. Our imperfections as Christians are not a surprise to our Lord Jesus. Remember, Dear OIC Saints, that *Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.* in **(Proverbs 27.17).**

TAKEAWAY #3

Christians who are presenting themselves to God as *Living Sacrifices* will receive courage from God for resolving conflicts with other Christians in the Local Church. They cannot say that they have presented themselves as *Living Sacrifices to God* if they refuse to get involved with the other members of the Body of Christ in their Home Church. *Iron sharpens Iron* means that God will mold more mature and wiser Christians. Peter wrote in (1 Peter 5.5) *Likewise you younger ones, submit yourselves to the elders. Yes, all of you be submissive one to another and clothe yourselves with humility, because "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*

(Romans 12.9-11) says, **9** *Let love be without hypocrisy. Hate what is evil. Cleave to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another with brotherly love; prefer one another in honor, 11 do not be lazy in diligence, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord,* These exhortations and instructions for godly living don't need much explanation or exegesis. I think that I should attempt to "bring out meaning" for *Let love be without hypocrisy*. The original Greek New Testament (**MOUNCE**) for "**without hypocrisy**" is "*anyokritos*, often translated as "**genuine.**" The same Greek Dictionary has like meanings as: unfeigned, real, sincere. Now I know how hard it is for us all in our efforts to not hurt someone's feelings as we feel we must say the "nice thing." I have trouble with this as a pastor, for I must often call people to be accountable for their sin! We all have trouble with this. **(Ephesians 4.15)** tells us: *But, speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into Him,*

who is the head, Christ Himself, Neither unfeeling bluntness nor honoring someone by silence when they have failed or hurt you is God's will! These simple instructions in **(Romans 12.9)** and **(Ephesians 4.15)** require much prayer for Christians. But, the context of the members of the Body of Christ in the Local Church means we all must risk hurting feelings so that we all may follow the Apostle Paul's instructions. But, we must apologize when we hurt feelings not according to God's Word or Spirit. **YES...much prayer Dear Saints!**

TAKEAWAY #4

If we at OIC draw closer together as a Family in Jesus, we will understand each other's imperfections; but, be able to be honest with each other. We must all remember in all our struggles in this world and in the Church that *Love never fails* in **(1 Corinthians 13.8)**

Next in **(Romans 12.10-11)** it says, ***10 Be devoted to one another with brotherly love; prefer one another in honor, 11 do not be lazy in diligence, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord,*** Brotherly love is not natural, yet God makes it happen in Christians who have presented themselves as *Living Sacrifices*. Reviewing my opening remarks and the Main Theme of the Book of Romans: living in AWE OF GOD for our Justification, leads to Dedicated Service. As we serve in our Home Church we connect better with fellow Christians. As an imperfect Family, we can work out differences in Love. Here, the Apostle Paul makes it clear that we are not only devoted to Jesus, but also *to one another in brotherly love*. Love puts others ahead of ourselves as we honor them. Diligence means that **“We are not playing Church like a computer game. Church holds Eternity for both those inside it and for those outside its walls.** The outsiders need to see the Body of Christ with love like that of Jesus. God will reveal how each of us are to serve Him, as we mature. If you don't know yet, “Then do something, anything, to help your Home Church!”

GOD'S CONDITIONAL LOVE TO CHRISTIANS-OBEDIENCE TO JESUS' WORDS

But note the **next verse immediately following these famous *saved by faith* Bible verses, **(Ephesians 2.8-9): 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, 9 not of works, so that no one should boast.****

And next, **(Ephesians 2.10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that we should walk in them. Loving God back** for the Gift of His Son, and being a *Living Sacrifice*, results in obedience to *walk in the good works which God prepared beforehand* {before we were Christians at all} ! **This shows how God's continuing love is not unconditional.** Now, God continues to love the Born-Again Christian, but, God's condition in expecting them to be *Living Sacrifices* means God expects Christians to love Him back, or in return. In particular, love the Lord Jesus and His Commandments for He bought the Christians

with His own blood. So, Paul then wrote in **(Ephesians 2.10)** *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that **we should walk in them.*** God keeps pouring His Love on us Believers, but if we love Jesus, we will respond with a desire to Love God Back! This is His Conditional Love. Our response is all about **how important** we see our Relationship with God the Father and Jesus the Son.

GOD'S WARNING TO CHRISTIANS

What is a serious way to **Not love God back? To not love His Children!** My Message in February was titled *“Will Your Time Come” this Year?* I focused on Jesus' Commandments, which are God's Conditional Love, to be and stay a Christian. Jesus' Condition, which is God the Father's Condition, is that Christians keep His Word. In **(John 14.23)** *Jesus answered him, “If a man loves Me, he will **keep My word.** My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our home with him.* In my Last Message I showed how the Lord's Promise for us to *never see {or taste} death* has the condition of keeping His Commandments.

Quoting from that Message in February: “John 8.51 51 *Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he shall never see death.”* Here Jesus is promising that Christians who keep His word shall never *see death.* Let us note that He did not say shall never physically die.

You may ask: Pastor Bruce, how much of His word must be kept for us to not see death?

Jesus did not give us mathematical spiritual equations to keep. This would simply become the LAW which He nailed to His Cross. But the spirit of the Law, now Jesus' Teachings, is in our hearts of love for our Jesus. Unlike sinners, Christians have Holy Spirit inside of them. Christians can chose to obey, and Holy Spirit is always *helping* Christians to obey Jesus' Words and Commandments! Obviously we need to read and memorize God's WORD to give the Spirit of Christ more to work with inside our hearts. But God promised an *inside job to make us become like Jesus.*

So, how can we get some idea of how we keep His word unto salvation, and how much of His Word and not see death?

All of Jesus' teachings are commands on how to live for Him. Loving Jesus moves all Christians to want to obey His teachings as commandments. But the Apostle John chose one of Jesus' commands as a test necessary for anyone to be called a Christian at all! John emphasized that if we keep walking in Jesus, the Light, we will stay in relationship with God. Then we will never see death. The command John chose centers on LOVE!

THE COMMANDMENT MOST VITAL TO KEEP WALKING WITH JESUS-AND TO NOT SEE DEATH

At the Last Supper on the night Jesus was betrayed Jesus said to His Apostles in (John 13.34): *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.* "

Then about 60 years later, John introduces in his Letter, the importance of keeping all of Jesus' commandments, but he emphasizes this commandment to love one another. In this Letter the Apostle John repeated Jesus' command as an "old" commandment. He was referring back to Jesus first giving it at the *Last Supper*, the night before Jesus' Crucifixion. Remember church that keeping Jesus' commandments from the heart is what God sees. He sees our desire to love Jesus even when we stumble in faithful obedience. Nevertheless John stresses a warning in a Christian's relationship to remain in Christ!

In (1 John 2.9-12): *9 Whoever says he is in the light but hates his brother is in darkness even until now. 10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. 11 But whoever hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for His name's sake."*

Hating a Christian brother is not just a one-time sin event in a moment of anger. It is a continual practice affecting a Christian's lifestyle! This attitude to Christians continuing to sin is the overriding meaning in John's Letter. This is clear in the original Greek verb tenses as translated in **(1 John 3.6/MOUNCE)** *6No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.* As we read these verses we really **need to note the Greek tenses.** This makes it clear that a real Christian who loves Jesus may sin; but will not *keep on sinning.* What John wrote in **(1 John 3.6/MOUNCE)** was in effect, Holy Spirit making clear in Christian practice what Jesus meant. That is that hating fellow Christians as a way of life threatens one's relationship with Jesus. It threatens one's getting to Heaven at all! Constantly grieving the Holy Spirit by hate takes a Christian out of God's protection zone. As in **(1 John 2.11)** *11 But whoever hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.* Note that the one doing the hating as a habit is at this point still a Christian. He *hates his brother* who is a Christian. But, this is a Christian who does not know where he is going, and has hate blinding his eyes. He is therefore **Meat for Satan!** As the Apostle Peter warned us all in **(1 Peter 5.8)** *Be sober and watchful, because your adversary the devil walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

Pastor, I am struggling with not hating a Christian! What can I do?

If a Christian is struggling with hating anyone, especially a Christian, he should plead with God to create love in his heart for that person. God will answer our pleas to keep recreating our sinful hearts to become pure and loving like Jesus' heart. It is a matter of humbling oneself at the feet of Jesus in prayer. Jesus said in **(Matthew 7.7)** "*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you.*"

HOW MUCH OBEDIENCE OF JESUS' WORDS TO NOT SEEING DEATH?: Often we say that God's love is unconditional. These verses in 1st John and Romans 12, show that after Rebirth in Christ, God's love is not unconditional. But if we desire to keep loving Jesus, God keeps giving us more of Holy Spirit to change our hearts to be more like His Son, and then we MATURE in obedience to Jesus' Commandments.

TAKEAWAY #5 – Living Sacrifice Christians do not hate a fellow Christian. Hate blinds Christians so that they cannot follow Jesus! Thus they do not have Jesus' powerful protection from the Devil.

Today's Message has tied or connected together the truths from the Bible of God's Unconditional Love unto Salvation, called Justification; with God's Conditional Love as *Living Sacrifices* and *Loving God's Children*, part of our Sanctification. Dear Christians remember that the Christian life is not difficult. It is *Impossible*. That is why God gave us His Spirit to cause it to happen. What a joy we will have after we enter Heaven and have received crowns of Glory and then to toss these at Jesus' feet! With God nothing is **Impossible!**

Let Us pray,

(HOLY COMMUNION)

REFERENCES

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