

VOC-September 2014: Living in Thankfulness

2. A life of thankfulness: *How do you show it?*

Dear Listeners,

In last week's message we made a beginning in our series about a life of *thankfulness*. The thankfulness we are to show pertains to the work of salvation by Christ, God's Son, whom He sent into this world to deliver us from sin and guilt and death and slavery to Satan. We saw that this work of salvation *continues*, as Christ *also* renews us by His Word and Holy Spirit, *transforming* our heart and mind, our thoughts and ways! Christ's purpose with this work, we saw, was: so that with our whole life we may show ourselves *thankful* to God for all the benefits we share by faith in Christ. Today, then, we are going to explore somewhat further the *quest* for this new life by asking the question: *how* do you show it, this life of thankfulness?

In answer to that question, dear listeners, we have come to realize already, I'm sure, that this requires a major *overhaul* of our heart and mind and soul: i.e. *a total conversion!* Indeed, when you see the work God is doing in your life by His Word and Holy Spirit, you will begin to see *change*: you realize that He has laid His powerful *claim* on you; He has become too strong for you with His Spirit, so that there are certain things you cannot do any longer. Well, that's the beginning of a true conversion in your life. Then you *thank God* for *changing* your life from this or that weakness or sin! What a *joy* in Christ it is that you start to see the seriousness of your evil doing! What *delight* it is that you start to hate sin in your life! That's how *thankfulness* enters your life! Conversion consists of thankfulness, which is the sacrifice of your entire life to Christ! Doing God's will in love, with heartfelt joy! Why? Well, because this awesome God wants to be your God, showed you His love for you, rescued you!

Those who are *converted*, dear listeners, are people who turn to God in *thankfulness*. They do so wholeheartedly! In all the letters the apostle Paul wrote, we see the same *order* of things he describes: he reminds his readers how they received the *gospel* of the cross of Jesus Christ, *believed* the gospel, and received the *Holy Spirit*. Then Paul describes extensively the great *change* taking place in life when the Holy Spirit is working

in it. He compares the dying of the old nature with the taking off of a garment, and the coming to life of the new nature with the putting on of a new garment. To Paul's readers, especially, this was a good comparison, for they indeed received a new garment upon their baptism by immersion! That ceremony, however, was not the *end* of things; from there it started, namely in a life of thankfulness!

Throughout our life of thankfulness, then, we show these two aspects in our response to the preaching of God's Word about this work of salvation: we *rest* from our evil works all the days of our life and let the Lord work in us by His *Holy Spirit*! All the days! Not just on Sunday but every day we *rest* from our evil works! Now what all is entailed in this, we will be seeing next week when I will speak to you about the *guide* you should use for such a change in your life; namely, the *Ten Commandments*! Thus we learn to see by faith how terrible *sins* are; so *terrible* in fact, that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, had to come from heaven and had to be nailed to the cross in order to bear God's anger over our sins! *We* destroyed this world! *We* spoiled it all! *We* caused wars to come! *We* killed all of life! *We* are *still* doing so or inclined to do it! *We* only have to look around us to see how these evil works *reign* in the world! Legalized abortion, pre-marital sex, common law relationships, seductive advertizing, dishonest and deceit in business practices, and the propaganda for the lie are common practice! Just imagine the wrath of God that's provoked over such sins! Christ *redeemed* us from this wrath, and by His power He enables us also to *reject* such practices and to *flee* such desires! Then in your response of faith you show *sorrow* for such sinfulness, and in your sorrow over sin you at the same time *hate* and *flee* from such sins! By His Spirit Christ reminds us of the price He paid for such terrible sins, and He strengthens us by His Spirit and Word to a new life by faith!

Do you see, dear listeners, that the gospel of the salvation in Christ does not leave us idle, or passive, or unchanged. There is not a message in the world, which incites and motivates us more to the fruits of faith than this proclamation of the gospel. The church confesses this so beautifully, where it says, "By the efficacious working of the same regenerating Spirit He also penetrates into the innermost recesses of man. He opens the closed and softens the hard heart, circumcises that which was uncircumcised, and instils new qualities into the will. He makes the will, which was dead, alive; which was

bad, good; which was unwilling, willing; and which was stubborn, obedient. He moves and strengthens it so that, like a good tree, it may be able to produce the fruit of good works." So far this quotation! What a *power* that must take, and what *time*! What a practical matter conversion is! Yes, then it becomes a joy and delight to learn to live in such a way that God is *pleased* again, when we trust in Him, profess His Name, serve Him in His congregation, and show our *love* to Him and the neighbour! See, I make all things new, God says, and indeed, He does so by His Word and Spirit! Through His Spirit we turn back to God in *thankfulness* for His salvation! That's *conversion*! That's how we show it in a life of thankfulness! Stay tuned, dear listeners, for next week I will be giving you the *details* when we focus on God's *rule* and *guide* for this life of thankfulness! Thank you for listening!