

VOC-September 2014: Living in Thankfulness

3. A life of thankfulness: What is your *guide*?

Dear Listeners,

This month our focal point is on a life of *thankfulness*; thankfulness for what? Thankfulness for the work of salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ! So far we have seen *why* we show this thankfulness: the Lord Jesus delivered us from sin and guilt and death and slavery to Satan, in order that we may live a *new life*. By faith in Him we share in this new life. The Holy Spirit of God gives us a new *heart*, renews our *mind*, and changes our life so that we are going to live for *God* again, to honour and glorify Him in our life! Last week we saw *how* the Lord Jesus does that work of renewal by His Word and Holy Spirit. Then today we are going to see *what such a new life is like*! What will be the *guide*, the *rule* or *standard* for that life! In our life of thankfulness we hate and flee from sin and we learn to live a new life in *obedience* to God's will again, delighting to do His will by keeping His *commandments*! By His Holy Spirit He lays this *law* in our heart.

Perhaps, when we hear the word '*law*' or when we are reminded of the *Ten Commandments*, we think of the occasion at which the LORD gave this law first to His people Israel in the OT. What a day that must have been! The people of Israel were trembling and shaking when they heard the thunder and saw the lightning, when the trumpets sounded and they saw the LORD coming down from heaven! Awesome! How in the world can you live in communion with such an *awesome God*?! Well, indeed, in and of ourselves we can't; our sins and transgressions condemn us (as we have seen). Thankfully we may come to this God saved by the blood of Jesus Christ! By faith in Christ, we may be *at peace* with God and walk before Him! We don't need to shake in our shoes for the holiness of God! We may come in fear of the holiness of God, with *deep respect*, because He has made *us holy* by faith in the blood of Christ! Then, for us, in a life of thankfulness and service and worship and love to God, we may use the *law of God* to show our thankfulness for His salvation!

Well, just as with the people of the LORD in the OT, today we should remember as well that the law *reminds* us of God's work of salvation, by grace: I am the LORD your

God who *delivered* you! I set you free from a life of slavery (to *sin*, that is for us)! Then we must realize that we did not receive this law in order to *earn* our salvation by works of obedience to this law. That was not the case with Israel in the OT either! No, the LORD *first* delivered them, and us, by grace, and *then* gave them His law. As Paul shows in 1 Corinthians 10, we share with Israel in the same Saviour, which is *Christ*; hence, we share in the same *rule* and *guide* and *standard* for our life of thankfulness as well. The apostle Paul works that out in many an epistle in which we recognize the *commandments* of the Lord. For the LORD, who so graciously redeemed in Christ and through Christ, wants to *preserve* in His grace those who share in the salvation of Christ by faith!

No wonder, then, dear listeners, that the LORD starts out His Ten Commandments with the words, "Now you shall have no other Gods before me!" I am your deliverer; I redeemed you by grace; therefore, for the sake of your life and salvation avoid and flee all *idolatry*! So the law shows us God's *grace*; it reminds us of our *deliverance*; that's the *gospel* in the law! God wants to be *the only one* in our life! That rule is *first* and *foremost* in our life in which we show our thankfulness to God for His salvation in Christ! He wants to see our *love* that way! That's what *love* is all about right?! The one we love is the one and only in our life. The one we love comes *first* in our thoughts. The one we love is the only one we give all our strength! That's why God gave the first commandment! Why? Well, because He knows that people are inclined to serve *other* gods, in whom people put their trust. God wants us to stay away from them!

We show our thankfulness, dear listeners, by showing our *love* and *trust* to God first of all, and *to God only*! Well, we know that from our inter-personal relationships too: only if people fully *trust* each other can they *love* each other; and people who love each other, want to be able to trust each other too. Our love in marriage, for instance, would be greatly undermined, if we would isolate certain aspects of our life and keep them for ourselves. The same could happen in our relationship with God. In the OT the people of Israel did so by putting their trust for the crops, for their fertility, their strength, in the *idols* of the nations. That can't be with the Lord, who wants to be *the only one*, because He saved us and wants to preserve us in this salvation! He doesn't want us to trust in our own good sense and judgment, our own strength and development, or in technology,

physicians, or whatever. No, trust *me* all the way! Of course, because *God* gave Himself in love to us in giving us His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! He redeemed our whole life, renews us completely; then it would be ungrateful if and when we would keep one or some aspects of our life for ourselves!

It is in this way, dear listeners, that we see God provide His *law* to preserve us; in thankfulness for His grace and in true love to Him with an undivided heart, we honour Him as God! That's not something we do in *words* only. We express it not only in our worship and in our songs of praise, we also show it in all our *deeds*. By His Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus redeemed us, set us in the new freedom in a life for Him, and He *preserves* and *protects* us in this new and free life with God *by His law*. Then we should use this freedom to live in *love*, to God and the neighbour! That's how you honour the LORD, and that's why He gave us His law! That we may live again in love to *God* and our *neighbour* by keeping these commandments! *How* we *can* keep them? Not in our own strength! Only *by prayer*! Indeed, by seeking our help and strength for this with *God* as well, we show our sincerity in our desire to show true thankfulness with our whole life to God! That, dear listeners, will be our focal point next week! Stay tuned!