

November 19, 2023 THANKSGIVING Meeker Christian Church

1 Peter 5:8 *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a **roaring lion**, seeking whom he may devour.*

Allow the Holy Spirit to imprint His message - personalized just for you – as we consider this Thanksgiving season. 1 Peter 5:8 *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a **roaring lion**, seeking whom he may devour.*

(PAUSE) **Thank You GOD for the warning** – now show us what to do about it.

The roaring lion loose on our earth is every occurrence of evil that is determined to undermined, cast doubt, and influence people to outright reject God. Understanding and identifying satan's antagonistic opposition to the gospel message is a marvelous reason for giving thanks. Thank You God we have been, and so far are granted strategic intelligence about our roaring lion enemy. Thank You God that we do not find ourselves totally defenseless in evils unceasing onslaught. Here is encouragement from Proverb's 14:26-27 *In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, And his children will have a place of refuge. 27 The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, To turn away from the snares of death.///* It is sound advise to make a note of those verses, read them in your personal quiet time and consider the opposite or alternative of what they are saying, - then examine the world around you and draw conclusions where the Holy Spirit will lead, guide, direct and encourage your daily walk with Him.

Let me list a small sample of reasons why we people who have accepted Jesus as Lord through the gospel message have for celebrating and cherishing Thanksgiving. Actually these reasons are in reality a daily thanks-giving lifestyle of prayer and praise unto Him from whom all blessings flow.

Let's go to the record of response to the gospel message of which we speak: Peter had been proclaiming Jesus as Messiah, the savior of responsive mankind – listen to this: Acts 2:37-39 *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for*

2. the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

Based on those scriptures what are the grounds for a Christian to start with thanksgiving? We can give thanks for being born, for being able to see, hear, reason, communicate, learn, obey, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and to know that all Bible promises are for us today - same as it was for them who we read about in Luke's gospel book.

Luke describes what resulted from Peter's preaching that gives us guidance and encouragement for praise and thanksgiving in direction for Holy living: Acts 2:41-42 *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Therein is revealed a sacred doctrinal teaching that is the **change agent** for everyone who has been justified and becomes a reason for our eternal expression of thanksgiving. Verse 41 Be baptized – most of the religious world readily emphasizes whatever baptism they have interpreted as valid. A legitimate concern may be that all religions tend to leave the impression that baptism is all there is to salvation.

Baptism is the doctrine of justification. It refers to the act of God declaring a sinner to be righteous on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ and His life, death and resurrection.

We rightly express thanksgiving that we personally were at the right time and in the right place with the correct motivation to *gladly receive* the gospel message and respond in baptism. We can never over express our thanks for our baptism. **Baptism is the change agent** that turns the sinner around from following evil to go the other way and seek righteousness. But that is just the beginning!

Okay we have them baptized – now what?

Listen up, for the “rest of the story!”

3. Acts 2:42 *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.* That is the next integral component of the salvation experience. It is called sanctification which is the process of being made holy and like Christ by God through His Holy Spirit. What did those who were baptized “continue steadfastly in” that sanctified them? Acts 2:42 *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Do those verses sound to you like salvation is a package deal? Could I say it another way perhaps? Being baptized shows we have at least a momentary understanding or motivation for God's love. But if we drop it there - and take no action beyond going under the water – we have missed the complete message of salvation to be thankful for. Salvation is not just a rite or ceremony of baptism, but it is the sign of a changed heart choosing to set about seeking and living righteously. Let me remind you – salvation is the first step of the eternal walk starting with baptism. That eternal salvation walk is not even interrupted by physical death, rather it just moves on to a new and sin free environment.

Now that is something to think about and be thankful for in every possible aspect of our eternal life that has is in process right now.

Just a further note of a reason for being thankful for your baptism: You are not baptized when you become good enough – exactly opposite – you are baptized because you understand you are a sinner who desires to be forgiven. That forgiveness is bestowed on and received by the person being baptized. I cannot think of a more compelling reason for giving thanks...

So just how thankful are we today in a self evaluation of our personal “*continuing steadfastly?*” Let's look:

1. From verse 42: *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.* The apostles' doctrine is the teachings of the Bible writers who were called and inspired by God for that special purpose of following through with our baptism.

4. In the church we spend most of our time on lessons and sermons in studying those writing – that is the act of sanctification or learning, growing and becoming more like Jesus. Growing every day to become more like Jesus is the surest way I know how of expressing true, sincere, pure thanksgiving! The apostles doctrine is encapsulated in Acts 2:38 *Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Our self-evaluation in following through after being baptized continues in Acts 2:42

2. *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and **fellowship**.* I so appreciate this persons writing I read it verbatim: “In order to understand the importance of Christian fellowship, we must first understand what Christian fellowship is and what it isn’t. The Greek words translated “fellowship” in the New Testament means essentially a partnership to the mutual benefit of those involved. Christian fellowship, then, is the mutually beneficial relationship between Christians, who can’t have the identical relationship with those outside the faith.

The mystery and privilege that is Christian fellowship is that it exists because God has enabled it by His grace. Those who believe the gospel are united in the Spirit through Christ to the Father, and that unity is the basis of fellowship. This relationship is described by Jesus in His high-priestly prayer for His followers: John 17:23 *“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”* The “complete unity” He refers to is the oneness that Christians experience in true fellowship, oneness with one another, with Christ and with the Father. 1 John 1:3 *that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

The importance of true Christian fellowship is that it reinforces these things in our mind and helps us to focus on Christ and His desires and goals for us. As iron sharpens iron, in

5. true Christian fellowship Christians sharpen one another's faith and stir one another to exercise that faith in love and good works, all to God's glory.

3. Our third self-inventory from Acts 2:42 *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the **breaking of bread**.* The Bible uses the expression "breaking of bread" in more than one way. The early Christians came together for common meals, which included the breaking of bread. Acts 2:44 *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common.*

Another type of breaking of bread is that observed at the Lord's Supper or Christian communion. We re-enact that observance every week as a way of remembering Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and the institution of the New Covenant in His blood. Each celebration of the Lord's Supper includes the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup of the fruit of the vine.

4. Our fourth self-inventory from Acts 2:42 *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.* God ordained prayer, Jesus taught and modeled prayer, Bible characters were proficient in it. And prayer is the incredible right, privilege and duty of every baptized believer to participate frequently in communicating personally with our God of creation! That's why prayer must be central, not peripheral, in our lives and families and ministries. Talk to Him in the same tone and seriousness that you talk to your best friend.

So how have you come along with your self evaluation of your daily thanksgiving response to Justification and continuing sanctification? Saying that sentence another way: So how have you come along with your self evaluation of your daily thanksgiving response to baptism and growing and living God's blessed owners manual instruction? Just a side note here – after justification and sanctification is glorification explained in Romans 8:30 *Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called,*

6. *these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.* Glorification is the moment a believer is taken to heaven.

Your self-evaluation and all these expressions of thankfulness culminates in:

- A. Souls would be saved by the purity of the example of christian lives...
- B. Those living in that manner would live a life without regret...
- C. You could live in assurance of eternal joy and peace when you receive the crown of life at glorification.

Our granddaughter Sarah is finishing up training as a 911 operator in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. The favorite thing she learned and has been putting into practice is before she goes to bed at night to make a journal of thanks for everything that she did well during the day. May I pass that scriptural concept to you – before you go to bed to remember to thank the Heavenly Father for what you did that day to honor God and your Christian faith. Let the devil have the mistakes, disappointments, frustrations, even carelessness because they all started with the very essence of his being anyway and you celebrate with thanksgiving the righteousness God is doing through you.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 *in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

Happy Thanksgiving – I hope you can stay for lunch.

1 Peter 5:8

Proverb's 14:26-27

Acts 2:37-39

Acts 2:41-42

Acts 2:38

John 17:23

1 John 1:3

Romans 8:30

1 Thessalonians 5:18