

# “Thank God for What Jesus is Doing Now”

## *Various Scriptures*

As we come to Thanksgiving weekend, many people gather as families and they will share how they are thankful for many things. But WHO gets the thanks for the benefits of life? Someone has to be responsible for these benefits. If you are thankful for a roof over your head, food on your table, clothes in your closet, a bomb-free and flood-free community, and you don't know the Lord, who do you thank? Yourself? Fate? Government? Mother Nature? If we don't know Jesus as our Saviour we cannot see our life from His perspective and won't thank Him and His Father for life's blessings.

Our theme this year has been “In Christ”. How did we get to be in Christ? We recognized we were sinners, separated from God, and that Jesus was sent by God to die in our place for our sins. We ask His forgiveness and accept Him as Lord of our life. When we accepted Jesus Christ as our Saviour we were placed in Christ. This is our new identity. We are now a Christ-one, sent to live like Him and reflect Jesus to our world.

So for us who are disciples in Christ, we are thankful for our salvation, for what Jesus did for us on the cross, rising from the dead so we too will also rise. But is that the only focus of our thanksgiving, what Jesus has done for us? Are we not thankful for what He is doing for us now? Sure – remind me again of what He's doing for us now. Jesus' work on the cross continues today obviously as He ...

## **Continually Changes Lives** **(Acts 1:1)**

Luke opened the book of Acts with this,

*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach*

“Began to do and teach” means the gospels record what Jesus started. The Acts of the Apostles is really the Acts of Jesus through the Apostles. For example, in Acts 2 when the Spirit comes on the disciples who miraculously speak the gospel in foreign languages without prior knowledge of that language, Peter explains it was Jesus who was doing this.

<sup>2:32</sup> *God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.* <sup>33</sup> *Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.*

Jesus poured out the Spirit on them which enabled them to continue His work of changing lives. 3000 people were saved that day and the chapter ends telling us the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

In Acts 3 Peter and John heal the man crippled from birth begging near the temple. When he asks Peter and John for money Peter says

<sup>6</sup> *Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.*

Who changed this man's life? Jesus. Sometimes it was even more direct like when Jesus Himself appeared to Saul on the Damascus road confronting him with the truth of his sin. Then Jesus appeared to Ananias telling Ananias to go to where Saul was and when he gets there Ananias clearly says,

*9:17 Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”*

Paul always credited Jesus when people were saved.

*1 Tim. 1:15 Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. <sup>16</sup> But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.*

Jesus was saving sinners long after the cross and continues to save sinners with the help of the Spirit through the sharing of His Word.

*Rom. 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ*

Jesus is still saving sinners today. That should encourage us to pray for our lost family and friends. Jesus continues His work of changing lives with His Father and the Spirit. All three are directly involved in saving souls:

*Titus 3:4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

Paul states we have the hope of eternal life from the moment we're saved. Nor does Jesus stop changing our lives once we're saved. He, His Father and the Spirit are always

## **Working All Things for Our Good** **(Rom. 8:28-31)**

*<sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. <sup>31</sup> What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

This is not everyone's good in the world. This is for the 'good of those who love Him' who are saved by faith. God is the One who is doing this but He's conforming us into the image of Jesus whose love secures our salvation ensuring that all God sovereignly does in our lives will be for our divine good, our ultimate destiny good – Christlikeness. A few verses further Paul explains how secure we are and that we can be assured God uses all things to work towards our Christlikeness, he says

<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

<sup>37</sup> No, **in all these things** we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Again God and Jesus and the Spirit work together so that anything and everything that happens to us can have a divine purpose. Nothing happens randomly. That's very reassuring when we go through difficulties in life. Paul doesn't say all things that happen to us are good. He says in all things God and Jesus can work for our good; our good being Christ-likeness.

Once saved we are in Christ and now we're being conformed to Christ. The goal of salvation is to be completely conformed to Christ which is called glorification.

Jesus declares we are secure in Him. In John 10:27 Jesus states to the Pharisees in response to their direct question 'Are you the Christ?',

<sup>27</sup> My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."

Jesus says proof of His Messiahship is our security in Him. If we're saved we're secure and all things can be used for the purpose of our conformity to Christ. If we're saved then we are advancing in conforming to Christ. Which is what the fruit of the Spirit is, Jesus' qualities. Jesus pointed this out in Matt. 13 in the parable of the soils. He described 4 responses that people make to the gospel. We read in Matt. 13:18-23;

<sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. <sup>20</sup> The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup> But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. <sup>22</sup> The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Notice 3 of the 4 times there's an initial positive response to the message. Receiving it implies accepting it initially. But one lasts only a short time when trouble or persecution comes. Another initially receives it but the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it making it unfruitful. The last is the only one that produces fruit. 'Fruit' meaning being like Jesus. Just because people make an initial positive response to the gospel does not mean they truly accepted Christ. What fruit was produced in their life by Jesus showing they are/were in Christ? To be in Christ means Christ is in you making you like Him.

When Jesus comes to wash the disciples' feet and Peter initially refuses, Jesus explains that unless He washes Peter's feet Peter has no part in Jesus. To which Peter replies, 'Wash my head and hands as well!' But Jesus says He is clean and only needs this correction, this growth moment

whereas not all of them were clean, referring to Judas. Judas would have made an initial decision to follow Jesus but over time he produced no fruit of Christlikeness.

How does Jesus help us stay secure in Him and produce fruit? Another way Jesus is working for us right now is

## **Jesus is Praying to God for What We Need** **(7:26-28)**

The author of Hebrews gives numerous strong arguments for how Jesus is superior in many ways to the many aspects of the Law. In Ch. 7 He's superior to the priests because Jesus is the only one truly qualified to come into God's presence for us. First as the sacrifice for our sins but secondly as our intercessor, our go-between with His Father. Listen to what he says about the implications of Jesus' eternity and our salvation as well as our spiritual maturing in Christlikeness:

*<sup>23</sup> Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office, <sup>24</sup>but because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. <sup>25</sup> Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

How can we know our prayers are heard? " Because Jesus is literally at God's right hand, and He maintains our relationship with Him and His Father. Nothing can snatch us from the His hand.

If Jesus lives to intercede for us, that tells me Jesus believes prayer is crucial to our spiritual maturing. He believes the way we can become more like Himself has a lot to do with prayer. What can Jesus' prayers to God through our prayers do for you and me?

*<sup>26</sup> Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup> Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. <sup>28</sup> For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.*

What is it we need? Conformity to Christ. But that's not how we often pray. Our prayers are often centered on the removal or avoidance of suffering. 'Lord, take this pain/worry/ discomfort away.' Or 'Lord help me to have a pain-free, comfortable, anxious-free day.' Maybe not those words but that's the way often pray. Not wrong but perhaps off-center.

Hebrews was written to Christians who were suffering and didn't like it. So he reminds them that their Saviour and High Priest suffered for them. He knows everything we go through. He relates to every hurt we have. Because He too had to suffer for us to draw close to God.

Here's where prayer is so vital. In prayer, as we come into God's holy presence we should (and Jesus wants us to) ask God for our needs. In asking God to meet our temporal needs we need to be more spiritually aware that God's will has a bigger goal for us through our spiritual needs; spiritual maturity.

*<sup>4:14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let*

us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

One more thing (of many) we can thank Jesus for doing for us now is, Jesus is ...

## **Preparing us to Meet His Father** **(John 14:1-3; 17:20-26)**

At the last Passover, Jesus told His disciples after the meal, that He was leaving soon in John 13:

*<sup>33</sup> "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. <sup>34</sup> "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." <sup>36</sup> Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."*

Knowing His talk was bothering them He reassured them in Ch. 14 that He was leaving for a good reason:

*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*

The word for 'Troubled' means shaken, unsettled, disturbed. The disciples are shaken by Jesus' words about death and departing. That is why we often review these verses when those close to us die in the Lord. We who know Christ are encouraged to trust God. If you are in Christ, you are secure in Jesus. He has a place for us in His Father's house. We look forward to being with Jesus and our loved ones in Christ in the Father's House. He's coming back for us to take us there one day to show us something we won't see until we're with Him and His Father. What's that?

*<sup>24</sup> "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.*

Jesus is looking forward to the day when we His followers, will see His true glorious self. Peter, James and John got a glimpse of that when He transfigured Himself before them (Matt. 17). Only those who know Him will get to be with Him and see His glory. But Jesus wants more people to be in Him. He continued praying

*<sup>25</sup> "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.*

*<sup>26</sup> I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.*

Jesus is still making Himself and God known through us. He works through us as we model how He transforms our lives. How the fruit of His love, joy, peace, and patience is seen through us. Yet Jesus is not just for His followers, He's praying for those who have yet to believe in Him. A few verses earlier He told us,

<sup>20</sup> *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

Did Jesus pray for us to believe in Him? I would say yes according to this verse. Could Jesus be praying for some-one right now to believe in the words we heard this morning? Jesus is most likely praying for someone this morning to put their trust in Him for their present as well as their future. The Bible tells us none of us are righteous. None of us are sinless. We all fall short of God’s glorious presence. We can’t save ourselves through being good because God’s standard for good is perfection. Then we have no hope? Just the opposite. Because none of us can save ourselves, He sent Jesus to be one of us, die for our sins, and rise from the dead. If we confess we are sinners and need saving, trusting in Jesus alone to save us, we become part of His family. We become His disciples. His Spirit comes into us and starts working in us to make us more like Jesus.

Thank Jesus today for what He’s done and is doing and will do in our lives. He’s working in us, through us and for us so that we will not only be like Him but that we will see Him in all His glory one day.

\* \* \* \* \*

If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at [olivet@rideau.net](mailto:olivet@rideau.net)