



## A Grateful Response

Good morning church, it is an honor to be able to worship with you today. My name is Dr. Mark Sandoval, and I am a physician at The Community Hospital in Cocorite, Port of Spain. This morning, you heard my wife speaking about WELLNESS from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, and with us are our 4 children, Amalee, Anthony, Angelise and Amberly, as well as my father and stepmother, and good friends Tony and Nathaniel. This morning, my presentation is entitled, *A Grateful Response*. But before we continue, I ask you to join me in a silent minute of prayer, asking for forgiveness for our sins. I ask you to plead with me for the Holy Spirit to give us a clear mind and sharp perceptions today so that we can understand the message and be transformed by it.

### Silence

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunity of meeting together on this Sabbath day. We do not have very many more Sabbaths to continue doing this. You are coming again very soon, and You are even now preparing a people to reflect your character completely in their lives, who will be perfected even as Jesus was perfect, who will vindicate Your name before a watching universe, and who will bring this great controversy to a close. Lord, please let us be that people who vindicate Your name. May we learn to surrender to you in all things, depend upon you always, and cooperate with you completely. Lord, we ask for your Holy Spirit to be amongst us today. We ask for a special regimen of your holy angels to guard this place today; to prevent the entrance of the evil angels and to allow Your children to understand Your words today. Please, Lord, forgive us of our sins. We are sinners in need of a Savior. We have treated ourselves in such a way as to unfit us to understand or participate in your salvation. Speak to our hearts and our minds, and may we not be the same from this point forward, because we have seen the glory of the Lord and we seek to conform our lives to Yours. We thank you for answering this prayer. In Jesus name, Amen.

Of all the topics that man can discuss, none is as important and pertinent to us as the topic of salvation. Nothing should occupy such a high place in our thoughts and speech than the work of God in the salvation of man. Nothing better exemplifies the power of the love and grace of God than the transformed life of a believer who was once a slave to sin but now walks in the righteousness of God. Today we hope to inspire you with the grave responsibility that each of us, as believers, has to play in the plan of salvation and in the great controversy.

As we begin, I want to introduce you to your Savior.

Open your Bibles with me to John 3:16. **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”** Salvation is always and only the work of God. God always initiates the steps of salvation and he empowers the choices leading to it. It is a free gift. **“For God so loved the world, that He gave....”** Salvation comes as a free gift to man. Ephesians 2:8 puts it this way, **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”** So, salvation is a free gift to man. We cannot earn it, we cannot pay for it, we cannot deserve it, but there is something that we can and must do in order for it to be any good to us personally.

Imagine for a moment with me that I have a really good friend that means everything to me. This friend, however, has a problem that will ultimately kill them, and the solution is too expensive. They could never pay for it. However, if I sell everything that I have, I can buy the solution to their problem. So I go and sell everything. No longer do I have a house, no longer do I have a car, no longer do I have a bed, or shoes, or food, or even a toothbrush. I purchase the solution, wrap it in a box and tie a bow around it and in rejoicing I bring it

to my friend. It is my greatest joy to be able to bring my good friend the solution to their problem. With tears in my eyes and joy in my heart, I bring this precious gift to my friend and place it in their hands.

How would I feel if my friend never opened the gift?

How would I feel if my friend wasn't thankful for the gift?

How would I feel if my friend pretended like nothing happened and didn't tell their other friends of the gift they had received?

How would I feel if my friend turned their back on me?

How would I feel?

Maybe we can start to understand what God feels like. You see, God gave us the most precious gift we could ever receive. Jesus, who was the Commander and Creator of the universe; Jesus, who was the Son of God; Jesus, who fashioned man from the dust of the earth with His own hands; Jesus was given to us by the Father. Not on a temporary basis either. Jesus will live in a human body for the rest of eternity. Jesus left the praise and adoration of the heavenly angels. He came to this world and entered a single cell in the uterus of Mary. He grew and developed as we do. He was subjected to every temptation we are and was born with our own propensities to sin. He battled with temptation, suffered derision, scorn, and shame. He walked this planet alone with no other human being ever really understanding Him or His mission. He suffered under the weight of all of our sin. He was whipped, beaten, mocked, abused, scorned, despised, and nailed to a cross, and He was separated from His father because of our sin. He died for you and for me. No greater gift could God have given. It cost Him everything! Absolutely everything!

\*7 Because of His sacrifice, He knows what you are going through. He has been there too. He knows your pain and your suffering. He knows about the abandonment, the abuse, the sorrow, the desperation, the pain. He knows because He has been there Himself, and because He was there with you through it all. He loves you so much that He was willing to give everything, and even to risk His entire kingdom to save you. He is able to comfort you, to lift you up in His arms and carry you, to save you from what threatens your very existence. Will you open His gift?

You see, God's free gift of salvation does me no good unless I open it.

How does He feel when such a precious gift is never opened?

How does He feel when the recipients of such a priceless gift aren't thankful?

How does He feel when we pretend like nothing has ever happened to us and we don't tell our friends and family of the wonderful gift of salvation given to us in the person of Jesus?

How does He feel when we turn our backs on Him by our thoughts, our words, and our actions?

How does He feel?

To the proportion of His great love, is the depth of His great disappointment at our shunning His sacrifice. We can never suffer as He does, because we do not love like He does. How does He feel?

In order to understand salvation, we must first understand the great price that it cost God to buy us back from the fall. In order to understand salvation, we must first have a concept of how great is the love of God toward us. **"...I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to...be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."** Ephesians 3:14-19.

You see, it is the understanding, the realization of the love of God expressed toward me that then transforms my mind, my heart, my life. How can I, understanding God's great love and sacrifice for me, do anything but offer to Him everything that I am and have? How can I be ungrateful when I understand the depth of this great love?

God did not offer us such a great sacrifice to merely save us from the consequences of sin. He did not live a perfect life and die a sinner's death so that you and I can continue to be slaves to sin, while at the same time claiming to be victorious in Christ. No, He came not only to forgive us our sins, but to save us from them. He not only offers us His blood to cover our past offences, but He freely offers us His Holy Spirit, to live in us and to transform us so that we can be perfected, even as Christ is perfect. He came to show us that it is possible, in human flesh, to trust in our Heavenly Father so implicitly that we can resist every temptation that comes our way.

**“For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”** Philippians 2:13.  
**“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”** Matthew 5:48. **“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”** 2 Corinthians 7:1.

**“Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”** Colossians 1:28. **“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection...”** Hebrews 6:1. **“But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”** James 1:4.

**“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,”** Jude 24. **“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”** 1 Corinthians 10:13.

God's grace has reached to the unutterable depths of pain and despair in order to buy us back from the fall, but grace is not all that is needed. If we return to Ephesians 2:8, we read again, **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”** There is faith that must be exercised on our part in order to make grace active in our lives. Faith is the hand that opens the free gift of God's grace. Again, John 3:16 states, **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”** The Greek words for believe and faith come from the same root, both meaning to trust. We are told in James 2:19 & 20, **“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”** A belief or a faith that does not express itself in actions is no belief, no faith.

The story is told of a professional tightrope walker who was walking the tightrope over a canyon. There was no net below him to catch him if he fell, and the thrill of the possibilities drew a large crowd to watch his act. He first walked across the rope from one side of the canyon to the other. Then he juggled items while he walked, and then he got a wheelbarrow and pushed it across from one side to the other. The crowd “Ooh'd” and “Aah'd” with his daring feats on the tightrope. Then, he asked the crowd if they thought that he could carry a person in the wheelbarrow safely across the canyon on the tightrope. Everyone cheered and raised their hands indicating that they believed he could. Then he asked for a volunteer. The crowd went silent, and no one volunteered.

You see, friends, it is one thing to say that we believe, it is quite another to get into the wheelbarrow. God's grace has provided everything for our salvation, but we have to exercise faith in God. We have to get into the wheelbarrow. There is no other way to be saved.

Faith is not just a mental ascent to a set of truths. It is not a membership in the remnant church. It is not being baptized in front of others as a witness of your new life in Christ. Faith is not preaching in front of a congregation, teaching the Sabbath School lesson, or holding a church office. Faith is none of these.

Faith is surrendering to, depending upon, and cooperating with God in everything I think, say, and do. Let me repeat that: Faith is surrendering to, depending upon, and cooperating with God in everything I think, say, and do.

What are the implications of this? Let me tell you, they are far-reaching.

As a Christian in a surrendered, dependent, and cooperative relationship with God, I no longer participate in the things I used to participate in. I no longer spend money on the things I used to spend money upon. I no longer eat the things I used to eat. I no longer enjoy the things I used to enjoy. I no longer think the thoughts I used to think. I no longer speak the way I used to speak. I no longer live the way I used to live.

**“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”** Galatians 2:20. **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”** 2 Corinthians 5:17.

In a faith relationship with Christ, I apply the principles of Philippians 4:8 to everything I think, listen to, and view. **“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”**

That eliminates television. That eliminates movies. That eliminates the news. That eliminates competition sports. That eliminates video games. That eliminates worldly magazines and books. That eliminates pop, reggae, jazz, calypso, soca, rap, ska, samba, and the like.

In a faith relationship with Christ, I apply the principles of 1 Corinthians 6:19 & 20, as well as Romans 12:1, **“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”** **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”**

That eliminates anything in your diet and lifestyle that does not built up, maintain, and strengthen your body. That eliminates excess use of sugar. That eliminates flesh foods and their by-products. That eliminates caffeine in all its forms. That eliminates alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. That eliminates vinegar and spices. That eliminates overeating. That eliminates irregular eating habits and schedules.

In a faith relationship with Christ, I apply the principles of 2 Corinthians 10:5, **“...bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”**

That eliminates thoughts of lust. That eliminates thoughts of anger and revenge. That eliminates thoughts of despair and despondency. That eliminates thinking evil of others. That eliminates thoughts of self-abnegation. And the list goes on.

In a faith relationship with Christ, I apply the principles of Colossians 4:6, “**Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.**”

That eliminates words that are untrue. That eliminates exaggerations. That eliminates explicatives and cursing. That eliminates coarse jesting and joking. That eliminates words of unrighteous anger or wrath. That eliminates inflections of frustration. That eliminates trifling and pointless conversations. That eliminates all gossip and backbiting.

Now, my friends, a faith relationship with Christ does eliminate many things from my life—not because God is arbitrary and wants to make life hard, boring, or stale. No, no! He only takes away that which is harmful to us so that He can replace it with the best. I dare say that if we follow these principles, some of us will have very little to think about, very little to look at and listen to, very little to say.

But do not be discouraged. With focus and practice, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we learn to love the words of God, we learn to hear the voice of God, we learn to converse with God, and not just talk at Him, we experience the beauty and joy and peace in the simple things of His creation. In a word, we are transformed. We have a new heart.

How many of us would like to have a video played right now of everything we thought, said or did for the last 7 days? A video that shows how you treated our spouse, our children, our parents, your coworkers, or our friends? A video that reveals what we have said about someone else? A video that reveals what we have chosen to put into your mouth? A video that reveals all the secrets of our life over the last 7 days? How would you feel? Would you confidently volunteer to have your video played, or would you do anything you could to prevent that video from being shown? What does your response reveal about your relationship with Christ?

To save us, Jesus gave up everything. To be saved, we have to give up everything. To save us, Jesus had to be perfected through suffering. To be saved, we have to be perfected through suffering. To save us, Jesus had to refuse everything worldly and only cling to the eternal. To be saved, we have to refuse everything worldly and only cling to the eternal. To purchase heaven for us, Jesus had to die for our sins. To be fitted for heaven, we have to die to our sins. If we are seeking to become citizens of heaven among the sinless heavenly beings, we must start living like it now, for this life is the only opportunity we have to prepare for the society of heaven.

Our time is short. We are on the verge of eternity. Everything in the world and in the church shows that we are rapidly fulfilling the very last of prophecy. The last great conflict will soon break upon this planet and we are told that the reality will be worse than anything we can anticipate. We have to be prepared to stand firm for God in the worst of times without cavailing or compromise. We do not have long to prepare. We cannot waste another day or another moment. We have to cast our vote on the side of heaven now. We have to decide to lay everything on the altar that separates us from God, and determine, in the strength of God, to live lives that are holy and upright. We have to deny self—our wants and desires—our feelings and passions, and surrender to the will and way of God. We have to pick up the cross and follow Christ. But we cannot do this if we ignore the physical realm.

We are told in Medical Ministry, page 221, “**The Creator of man has arranged the living machinery of our bodies. Every function is wonderfully and wisely made. And God has pledged Himself to keep this human**

**machinery in healthful action if the human agent will obey His laws and cooperate with God. Every law governing the human machinery is to be considered just as truly divine in origin, in character, and in importance as the word of God. Every careless, inattentive action, any abuse put upon the Lord's wonderful mechanism by disregarding His specified laws in the human habitation, is a violation of God's law."** Will someone who continues to violate the laws of God be fitted for heaven? What about someone who can't even understand the truths of salvation because they have indulged appetite?

In Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 2, page 61, we are told, **"You need clear, energetic minds, in order to appreciate the exalted character of the truth, to value the atonement, and to place the right estimate upon eternal things. If you pursue a wrong course, and indulge in wrong habits of eating, and thereby weaken the intellectual powers, you will not place that high estimate upon salvation and eternal life which will inspire you to conform your life to the life of Christ; you will not make those earnest, self-sacrificing efforts for entire conformity to the will of God, which His word requires, and which are necessary to give you a moral fitness for the finishing touch of immortality."**

In Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 2, page 352, we are told. **"It cannot be too often repeated that whatever is taken into the stomach affects not only the body, but ultimately the mind as well. Gross and stimulating food fevers the blood, excites the nervous system, and too often dulls the moral perceptions, so that reason and conscience are overborne by the sensual impulses. It is difficult, and often well-nigh impossible, for one who is intemperate in diet to exercise patience and self-control... If ever there was a time when the diet should be of the most simple kind, it is now. Meat should not be placed before our children. Its influence is to excite and strengthen the lower passions and has a tendency to deaden the moral powers."** Do we live in a day and age when moral powers are deadened? When moral perceptions are dull? When sensual impulses control us, rather than reason and conscience? Do we live in a day and age when impatience and compromise define God's remnant people? Maybe we should start cleaning out our cupboards and refrigerators in an act of repentance before our Lord.

The Ministry of Healing page 315 tells us, **"The moral evils of a flesh diet are not less marked than are the physical ills. Flesh food is injurious to health, and whatever affects the body has a corresponding effect on the mind and the soul."**

Ministry of Healing page 317 states, **"Is it not time that all should aim to dispense with flesh foods? How can those who are seeking to become pure, refined, and holy, that they may have the companionship of heavenly angels, continue to use as food anything that has so harmful an effect on soul and body? How can they take the life of God's creatures that they may consume the flesh as a luxury? Let them, rather, return to the wholesome and delicious food given to man in the beginning, and themselves practice, and teach their children to practice, mercy toward the dumb creatures that God has made and has placed under our dominion."**

And on page 316, we are told, **"It is a mistake to suppose that muscular strength depends on the use of animal food. The needs of the system can be better supplied, and more vigorous health can be enjoyed, without its use. The grains, with fruits, nuts, and vegetables, contain all the nutritive properties necessary to make good blood. These elements are not so well or so fully supplied by a flesh diet. Had the use of flesh been essential to health and strength, animal food would have been included in the diet appointed man in the beginning."**

But it is not just the eating of flesh foods that negatively affects us. In Ministry of Healing, page 306 we are told, **“Many who discard flesh meats and other gross and injurious articles think that because their food is simple and wholesome they may indulge appetite without restraint, and they eat to excess, sometimes to gluttony. This is an error. The digestive organs should not be burdened with a quantity or quality of food which it will tax the system to appropriate.”**

Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 2, pages 69 & 70 goes on, **“Thousands have indulged their perverted appetites, have eaten a good meal, as they call it, and as the result, have brought on a fever, or some other acute disease, and certain death. That was enjoyment purchased at immense cost. Yet many have done this, and these self-murderers have been eulogized by their friends and the minister, and carried directly to heaven at their death. What a thought! Gluttons in heaven! No, no; such will never enter the pearly gates of the golden city of God....There is a place appointed for all such among the unworthy, who can have no part in the better life, the immortal inheritance.”**

We have learned something about flesh foods and gluttony, what about intemperance? In Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 3, page 487, we read, **“Intemperance commences at our tables in the use of unhealthful food. After a time, through continued indulgence, the digestive organs become weakened, and the food taken does not satisfy the appetite. Unhealthy conditions are established, and there is a craving for more stimulating food. Tea, coffee, and flesh meats produce an immediate effect. Under the influence of these poisons the nervous system is excited....**

**The appetite is educated to crave something stronger which will have a tendency to keep up and increase the agreeable excitement, until indulgence becomes habit, and there is a continual craving for stronger stimulus, as tobacco, wines, and liquors. The more the appetite is indulged, the more frequent will be its demands and the more difficult of control. The more debilitated the system becomes and the less able to do without unnatural stimulus, the more the passion for these things increases, until the will is overborne, and there seems to be no power to deny the unnatural craving for these indulgences. The only safe course is to touch not, taste not, handle not, tea, coffee, wines, tobacco, opium, and alcoholic drinks.”**

In Counsels on Diets and Foods, page 345, we are told, **“Condiments are injurious in their nature. Mustard, pepper, spices, pickles, and other things of a like character irritate the stomach and make the blood feverish and impure.”**

And on page 113, we are told, **“Far too much sugar is ordinarily used in food. Cakes, sweet puddings, pastries, jellies, jams, are active causes of indigestion. Especially harmful are the custards and puddings in which milk, eggs, and sugar are the chief ingredients. The free use of milk and sugar taken together should be avoided.”**

We find the following on page 370, **“In regard to cheese, I am now quite sure we have not purchased or placed on our table cheese for years. We never think of making cheese an article of diet, much less of buying it.”** And on page 368, we are told, **“Cheese should never be introduced into the stomach.”**

Do you find this advice hard to stomach? Let me bring you some good news. The Ministry of Healing, page 298 tells us, **“Persons who have accustomed themselves to a rich, highly stimulating diet have an unnatural taste, and they cannot at once relish food that is plain and simple. It will take time for the taste to become natural and for the stomach to recover from the abuse it has suffered. But those who persevere**

**in the use of wholesome food will, after a time, find it palatable. Its delicate and delicious flavors will be appreciated, and it will be eaten with greater enjoyment than can be derived from unwholesome dainties.”** Don’t worry, your taste buds will change. They replace themselves about every 30 days, so the new taste buds, unadulterated by the previous substances, will learn to appreciate the new healthy foods that you choose to eat.

We are admonished in Ministry of Healing, pages 295 & 96, **“Those foods should be chosen that best supply the elements needed for building up the body. In this choice, appetite is not a safe guide. Through wrong habits of eating, the appetite has become perverted. Often it demands food that impairs health and causes weakness instead of strength. We cannot safely be guided by the customs of society. The disease and suffering that everywhere prevail are largely due to popular errors in regard to diet.”**

**“In order to know what are the best foods, we must study God’s original plan for man’s diet. He who created man and who understands his needs appointed Adam his food. “Behold,” He said, “I have given you every herb yielding seed, ... and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food.” Genesis 1:29, A.R.V. Upon leaving Eden to gain his livelihood by tilling the earth under the curse of sin, man received permission to eat also “the herb of the field.” Genesis 3:18.”**

**“Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator. These foods, prepared in as simple and natural a manner as possible, are the most healthful and nourishing. They impart a strength, a power of endurance, and a vigor of intellect that are not afforded by a more complex and stimulating diet.”**

Does it seem too difficult? Is the narrow way too hard? Don’t despair. We find hope in Ministry of Healing pages 130 & 131. **“Apart from divine power, no genuine reform can be effected. Human barriers against natural and cultivated tendencies are but as the sandbank against the torrent. Not until the life of Christ becomes a vitalizing power in our lives can we resist the temptations that assail us from within and from without.”**

**“Christ came to this world and lived the law of God, that man might have perfect mastery over the natural inclinations which corrupt the soul. The Physician of soul and body, He gives victory over warring lusts. He has provided every facility, that man may possess completeness of character.”**

**“When one surrenders to Christ, the mind is brought under the control of the law; but it is the royal law, which proclaims liberty to every captive. By becoming one with Christ, man is made free. Subjection to the will of Christ means restoration to perfect manhood.”**

Will you make the choice? Will you place your will on the Side of the Lord’s? Will you fall at the feet of Jesus, confess your sins and ingratitude and walk hand in hand with the Lord? Will you give up your tastes, desires, wants, and appetites, and surrender them to the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit? Will you choose to give up that which you know to be harmful to you, and only use that which is good? Will you offer to God a living sacrifice rather than a dying sacrifice? Will you allow the Holy Spirit to cleans your soul temple of all the defiles so that you can be a spotless temple for the Lord? If you would like to make a special commitment to the Lord, to allow Him to use you and cleans you as He sees fit; to dedicate yourself to entering a faith relationship with God, submitting to, depending upon, and cooperating with Him in everything you think, say and do; then stand with me now as we pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, here we stand. We are standing before You because we recognize our need. We are standing before You because we have messed up. We are standing before you because we need your forgiveness. Please forgive us for our sins, our backsliding, our ingratitude for the great gift of salvation you

have offered to us. We are standing before you because we need to be transformed by a faith relationship with you and we offer ourselves to be faithful to that relationship. We are standing here miserable, poor, blind, and naked before You. Lord, place your garment of righteousness upon us. Give us Your gold tried in the fire, and your eyesalve to open our eyes to see our true position. Lord, take us and transform us. Bless us according to the magnitude of your blessings as we obey your laws, and Lord, curse us if we continue in our rebellion. Open our eyes to recognize Your curses and to turn back to You, and You will save us. You are coming soon, Lord, prepare us to be Your children who will stand for you no matter what. We thank You Lord, for answering this prayer, in Jesus' name. Amen.