

## **Catch the Wind** **(Lift: Carried by the Wind of the Spirit – Part II)**

5/3/2009

The notes that follow each question below come from discussions that occurred after the sermon or further consideration of some of the issues raised. They should not be considered the “correct” answers by any means. It is hoped that they will provide a starting point for developing your own discussion of Pastor Steve’s sermons.

1. This new series is about the Holy Spirit and our own spirituality. The second sermon in the series deals with our assurance of our salvation. Pastor Steve listed three risks factors for lacking assurance. What were they and why do each of them cause problems?

A) Born and raised Christian: If we grew up in a Christian family, we didn’t really “become” something different over time. We didn’t wallow in sin and then were miraculously saved. Rather, it was as if life chose us, but how sure are we that we are truly chosen versus just going through the motions we were taught and using the words we have heard all our lives?

B) Navel gazer – a perfectionist who analyzes and internalizes everything they hear or read about God and then projects it on themselves. This person is similar to a hypochondriac who “gets” every disease they ever read about. This person will likely be unconvinced that they are good enough for God as they carefully inspect each flaw, feeling like they never measure up.

C) A New Christian – After conversion, the new Christian may find themselves back in the same patterns and amongst the same friends as before. Thus, they doubt whether anything genuine has happened (whether anything actually “took”). It is critical at this juncture that the shallow Christian is disciplined by more mature Christians. Otherwise, we fall into old patterns of behavior that will lead us away from God.

None of this is surprising or new. The disciples of Jesus doubted even while He was in their midst and certainly after the crucifixion.

2. Read Romans 8:9 – 11 and try to put this somewhat circuitous argument in terms that a nonChristian might be able to understand?

The presence of the Holy Spirit within you is an automatic part of your accepting the gift of salvation paid for by the death of Christ. The Holy Spirit is there whether you know it, feel it, or acknowledge it or not. If He is not there, then no conversion has taken place.

Look at 1 Cor. 6:19-20 – It says your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Note that the verb “is” tells us in the present tense that it’s a done deal. It is not “can be” if God or you choose. The Holy Spirit is there.

3. Read Romans 8:12-17 and look at this description of our heritage. We is the significance of this relationship with God?

We are children of God, which makes us heirs of His inheritance. Whatever is His is also ours. Further, that means He will treat us as one of His children, which means He will love us and care for us.

4. Romans 5:5 describes a gift God gave us. Galatians 4:4-7 explains why He did that. See if you can put the pieces together.

a) Rom 5:5 says that God gave us the Holy Spirit.

b) This gift was an early payment on our inheritance. Thus, we don't have to wait until we pass into eternal life to enjoy some of what our heavenly father wants to share with us.

5. Pastor Steve then shared four kinds of authorities by which we will "know" about our salvation. Name each and describe them, including the extent to which that person would love and/or fear God.

A) Self – These people know what they know. They have confidence. They believe they are Christians because they trust themselves. Further, they know God is a good God, so if they live a good life, God will treat them fairly. These people have neither a fear of nor a love for God. They see no need to be grateful for anything.

B) The System – These people rest on grace. Their guilt has been erased by an action. They recite the sinner's prayer, have themselves baptized, and now they have jumped the proper hoops to be saved. Their assurance is based entirely on works. They fear God, but do not love Him. (See Mark 9:20-24 for an example of someone with this shallow faith).

C) Scripture – These people follow the guidance of the Bible, but in a bondage kind of relationship. The Bible is full of rules and directives - some reassuring, some disturbing - thus, these people are whip-sawed between feeling loved by God and feeling inadequate to live up to His expectations. They both love God and fear God, but the relationship is based on rules, and they are constantly discovering more rules, which renew their uncertainty about their salvation. This is often the basis for the multiple trips to the altar experienced by many adolescents and young adults.

D) Spirit – These people have assurance because the Holy Spirit bears direct witness to their spirit in a very personal, continuous way. This assurance is based on a loving relationship between God and us. These people also have confidence, but it is not based on ourselves. They also rely on grace, but marvel at the wonder of the undeserved love God displays for us. These Christians read the Bible and discern a growing resemblance between how it describes believers and themselves. They love God with a love that casts out fear. (see 1 John 3:20 & 2 Timothy 2:13)

6. Are these four authorities for knowing we are saved simply levels of maturity, such that one should expect to experience them all at some point in our Christian walk? Or are they distinct vantage points that some people occupy because of their experiences and inclinations? How easy is it to move from basing our assurance on one authority to a different one?

This discussion could take off in a variety of directions. There is certainly some basis for suggesting that the new Christian would start by trying to “act” like a Christian through emulation of those around them. Thus, they may feel assurance because they are learning “The System”. As they study the Bible, one might argue that they move into the “Scripture” basis for assurance and, with proper discipling, eventually to the “Spirit” level. However, it would seem unlikely that this is the path God would prefer for us. The power of the Holy Spirit at the time of Pentecost was so real that it is likely many became Christians and had a Spirit level of assurance right from the start.

7. It is one thing to read the words that we are adopted children of God. It is another to feel the emotional attachment that a child feels for a parent and know that the loving parent is the Creator of the Universe. How did Pastor Steve describe this relationship and what we would feel if it were real?

We would know God as our Father, and would call Him by the name “Abba”, which is similar to how we use the term Dad. It is clearly a term of endearment that would reflect a close and loving relationship. One does not just walk up to any stranger and address him as Dad.