

The Air Has Left My Sail; Am I Still Moving?

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INTRODUCTION

This summer my family will be flying to Michigan to spend a couple of weeks with my side of the family. One of the things I look most forward to is getting some time to get out on the water on a sail boat. Some of my fondest memories of childhood involve time spent on my grandpa's sailboat. However, since I was 12 my opportunities for sailing have been very rare since that is when we moved away from Michigan. After I graduated from high school, my parents moved back to Michigan where over the last 15 years they have had a number of different small sailboats. When we go back to visit that is usually what I look forward to the most.

The trouble with a sailboat is they are often not also motorboats. They are driven by wind. When there is a lot of wind riding in a sailboat can be quite exhilarating even a little scary. Your adrenaline really gets pumping. I prefer a steady wind that doesn't require you to constantly be on your guard for gusts. This to me is why I like sailing. It is so peaceful. Having no wind is the worst though. You can't see the effects of the wind so it seems like you are not even moving. In reality you are moving, but the pace is so slow you can't notice it. You are moving with the tides of the water.

I'm telling you about sailing to illustrate our life in Christ. In our walk with the Lord there are times when we will have lots of wind and our hearts will be pumping. Some people call this a spiritual high or a mountain top experience. This kind of experience usually happens because of an event or experience and usually it happens because we have released some sin from our life and we feel freer than ever. We want to shout out about our faith and we are on fire for God. There is a lot of emotion.

But like Moses in the Old Testament, we can't stay on the mountain. We have to come down and be about the Lords work

in the world. Mountain top experiences are special occasions; they are not where we live all the time.

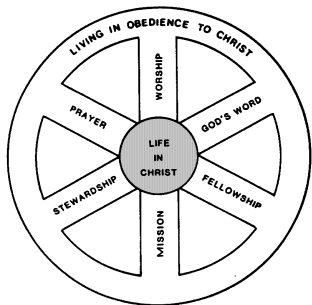
Where we normally live our Christian life is in the steady and consistent winds. This is where we sense God at work in our lives. Though there are occasional bumps and hurdles, we get through them and we move on. We may not be dancing in the streets and shouting from the roof tops, but we are confident in our relationship with God and trust Him with our lives.

The hardest times are when the wind leaves our sails. The emotional connection to God seems to have disappeared. We've lost the fire. This is where we question our salvation. We think that perhaps all the good times were just a facade. We wonder if we were faking the emotionalism. We wonder if God was really there in the first place. Is my boat still moving?

I want to encourage you this morning that in nearly every case your boat is still moving. You just are going to have to look a little harder for the signs. If I were on a sailboat with no wind, I would look to the shore and look for landmarks that I've passed. Seeing my boat move past them proves to me that I'm still moving.

What are our landmarks? Today, we are continuing our series on discipleship. Last week I introduced the topic and we each had to decide if the cost of discipleship was worth it. Over the course of a number of weeks we're going to look at some of the most basic yet often neglected aspects of discipleship.

Last week I also asked you to compare the Christian life to the wheel of old time covered wagon. (*explain the wheel*) Today and



the next two weeks we are going to be working on the hub. The hub is where everything on the wheel begins. If you don't have a hub there is nothing to connect the wheel to your wagon. Similarly, if you don't have Christ in your life you're not going to get anywhere spiritually because it all starts with Him.

Today's focus is on our assurance of salvation. In other words, when the wind has left our sails, how can we be sure we're still moving? Or in other words again, when the emotions have left, how can we know that we are still saved.

FIRST, REMEMBER THAT EMOTIONS CANNOT BE TRUSTED. Emotions and how they are expressed differ from person to person. Some people are very emotionally expressive, while some are emotionally repressive. It's kind of like the difference between introverts and extroverts. Does that mean that introverts are less spiritual?

Further, if emotions are good indicators how does that work when we are sad, angry or simply not having a good day? If we don't feel like dancing for Jesus does that mean we are not saved?

INSTEAD OF EMOTION, WE MUST RELY ON OUR FAITH. When we start to doubt we need rely on the word of God. It is solid and trustworthy. *(read Hebrews 10:38)* Faith is what gets us through the dark times. Faith draws us back to the promises of God's word.

Let's finish this morning message with a two ways we can know we are saved.

FIRST WE HAVE BASED ON THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD. When we meet God's conditions, as revealed in His Word, we can be assured we are children of God. *(Read 1 John 5:11-13)*

11And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

So God's word promises us if we have Jesus in our life we are saved. If we were to go back to verse 1 of this chapter we would see that to have Jesus in our life means to believe in Him as the Christ, which means messiah or savior. Meaning that if we believe in the gospel story that tells us Jesus was crucified for our sins and that He rose from dead on the 3rd day, we are saved. This belief involves

the confession of our sins and a proclamation with our lips that we believe in Jesus. (see also Romans 10:9-10)

SECOND, OUR ASSURANCE COMES FROM OUR CHANGES LIVES. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tell us that when we are in Christ “the old has gone and the new has come.” When Nicodemus asked Jesus what he had to do to be saved Jesus told him he had to be born again. In other words he needed a fresh start or a new beginning.

Over the years I've often said that if you sought salvation from God and nothing in your life changed from that moment I would question whether or not you were serious. Even the life of a generally good person should change when they seek salvation from God and if there's been no change something went wrong. I'm not saying that we're going to be perfect, but our way of thinking will be different. The way we talk will be different. The things we do will be different.

CONCLUSION

There are going to be times of doubt in your life, when you will question your salvation. This kind of question may come during a tragedy that causes you think more on the afterlife. It may come after a time when you give in to temptation and are feeling extreme guilt. In those times it will be helpful for you to remember these assurances.

1. Assurance based on the promises of God's word that tell you that if you believe in Jesus risen from the dead you are saved.
2. Assurance based on the changes to the way you live your life since making the decision to believe in Christ.

This morning you may have been challenged by these assurances because you realize they are not true for you. Perhaps you are questioning Christ's salvation or you have looked at your life and realize you have reverted back to the old way of living.

Be assured this morning that God loves you deeply and He cares for you immensely. We cannot measure His compassion. Seek Him this morning so you can be assured of your salvation.