

## Peace of Mind for the Undrammatically Converted

I have received some great responses whenever I give my testimony. Allow an abbreviated version today: I was down in the gutter. I wallowed in the muck and mire of this old world. I did everything there was to do, until I was gloriously saved at the age of six!

Last Wednesday evening, in the preliminary time before leaving the church for soul-winning/discipleship out-reach, an interesting conversation was taking place. The subject of using your own testimony was brought up. A couple of our ladies who were not saved from a life of debauched sin, but much like myself were reared in the church and soon after coming to the age of accountability, received Christ. One of the ladies remarked, “Well, do we simply tell them (the people we are witnessing to) our testimony?” Todd Montgomery, quickly spoke up and said, “What? saved as a kid without having lived in sin? How boring!” Some of you may remember Todd’s testimony last Sunday night, having been won to the Lord while at Texas A & M University. Well, every one laughed. Jesus said, “*Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much...*” (Luke 7:47). Although one is saved before a life-time of sin is committed, he can still love much because all of us, when we see who we are without Christ, may boast in His grace, not our goodness that saves us.

In a church like ours, the salvation experience is mentioned often, and rightly so. Also in a churchlike like ours, we have on-going generational Christianity. This means many of our people have parents, grandparents and even much further back who are Christians. Even your pastor who writes these words does not know what it is like to live in an environment outside of Christian values or worldview. Please understand, I am very happy about this! I believe it is just as great, if not greater to be saved from a life of sin than out of a life of sin. My goal for each and everyone of the Christchurch youth is not to sew “wild oats,” but rather to be saved young and live for Jesus everyday of their life.

Do those of you who read these words ever fret over your undramatic conversion? D.L. Moody said, “For some, conversion is like the flashing of a meteor; you can see the sky light immediately and are aware of the moment very well. For others, it is like the rising of the sun and you don’t know exactly when the rays hit you first.” Now, this is logical. And to some degree, it may suffice a little comfort. But for the devout evangelical, we still believe the Bible teaches instantaneous conversion and we would like to know when we can say we were delivered from darkness unto light (I Peter 2:9). For instance, today sunrise was clocked at precisely it is 5:57 a.m., Central Daylight-Savings Time. If you check this out you will see that our day is declared daylight at 5:57 a.m. Before sunrise, I can see light, I know day is approaching. If I see a meteor flashing across the sky, I call out to anyone near-by, “Look at the sky!” I did not race outside at 5:57 a.m. and scream, “Hallelujah, It’s daylight!” For one thing, I am certain everyone in our neighborhood might not appreciate it. Jesus said, “*Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again*” (John 3:7). Tomorrow sunrise gets to us at 5:56 a.m.; every day is different.

I want to be an encouragement to the flock that I pastor and the fellow Christians whose eyes fall on these lines and who feel undrammatically converted to find peace if they are in a quandary about their personal salvation experience. How do you know you are saved when you experienced a sunrise, rather than a meteor flash? Our answer is in the Word of God. I John 5:13, the Apostle tells us why this wonderful epistle was written: “*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*” So, we have a book in the Bible that is going to help us know that we have eternal life. There are seven places in I John that the Holy Spirit informs us of ways we know Him, that we passed from death unto life or that we dwell in Him. There are five points of assurance taken from these verses that will prayerfully help you:

### **1. We practice obedience.**

*“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”* (I John 2:3). We know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him (I John 3:2), but until then we are striving for perfection. Let no one think that he or she may live a completely sinless life.

Even the thought of foolishness is sin (Proverbs 24:9). When a person is truly a Christian they practice righteousness. Their backslidings are temporary. *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand”* (Psalm 37:23,24). When a Christian is down, they don't stay down. By God's grace and help they get up. They have a new nature. When you are saved, God the Holy Spirit moves into your life. He activates the spirit within you making you born of the Spirit. So there is a spirit in you that totally repulses sin of all kind. You are miserable until it is confessed and dealt with. *“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God”* (I John 3:9). As a rule, when you are saved, you cannot be happy walking in sin, because it is against your new nature! The saved person is most happy when he is doing the right things in life. And this is one reason you know you're saved. *“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”* (I John 5:3).

## **2. The Word of God is our governing compass.**

*“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him”* (I John 2:5). The Bible is our compass on life's sea, the tangible radar that God uses in guiding us. It is our rule of faith, the Book of Covenant.

In the history of civilized learning we started with an oral tradition. Truths were passed down on everything we know and believe by oral transmission. Then the alphabet was developed and language began to be written down. We passed into learning by scribal transmission. Gutenberg's Press helped advance mankind into the printing transmission. We live now in an image-based culture. It is estimated that a child will spend 15,000 hours in front of a television compared to 11,000 hours in a classroom setting. So we now live in an electronic transmission learning tradition. In this television/computer/video era, we still need desperately the printed word. Without putting my blessing on his theology, Jacques Ellul, sociologist and philosopher, said something that was absolutely true about the age we are living in now, *“We are dealing with a society in which there has been the process of the humiliation of the Word.”* You see, we as Christians base our beliefs on the written word. Have you noticed how much of our worship is shifting to the visual? I am not against a moderate use of this, provided we back it up with The Word. In the visual, feelings-oriented atmosphere in many of the church services of today, it is easy to be swallowed up in an amalgamation of lights, responses and noise. The Word has been humiliated. Written word to many a youth is boring. A few years ago, some of the television learning programs became popular and much praise was given to them. Although glitzy, colorful and loud, I recall a prophetic type warning given. The warning was these methods may not enhance our kids reading skills, because in real life, we don't have multi-colored letters dancing across the pages of our books singing to us. Dostoyevsky prophetically said, *“First art will imitate life, then life will imitate art; then life will draw its very reason for its existence from the arts.”* And today much of our media entertainment mocks morality and belief in God.

*“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD”* (Amos 8:11). The Bible says, *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9). Sometimes people will base what they believe on the heart or feelings, but as the Scripture says, we can be deceived. The good news is: *“And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things”* (I John 3:19,20). At this time we must give exaltation rather than humiliation to the Word. *“Being born*

*again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (I Peter 1:23). What a blessing that God says: But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him” (I John 2:5). We follow the Word of God, we keep the Word of God and by this we know we are in Him! Next week I want to give you three more reasons we know we are Christians, no matter how dramatic our conversion was!*

-Pastor Pope-

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