

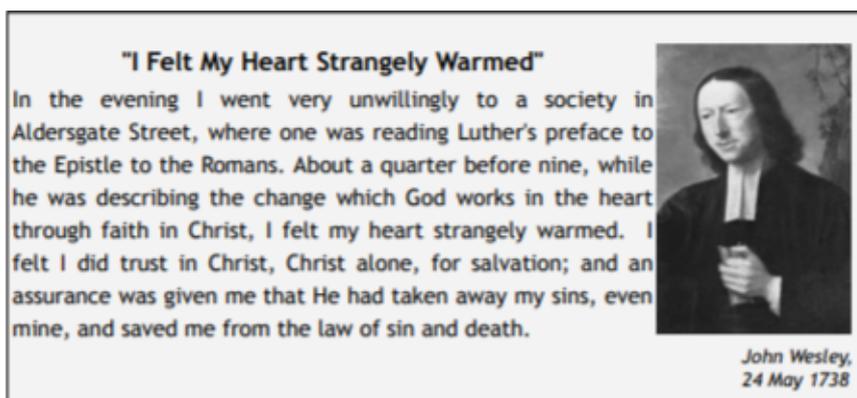
erSermon Topic: “Witness of the Spirit” by Rev Melvin Huang

Sermon Text: Romans 8:12-17

Romans 8:12-17

¹²Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶**The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.** ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

A. The doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit



- The plaque containing Wesley’s account on Aldersgate Street seems to suggest that was when Wesley received Christ. However, it was not a testimony of conversion, but a testimony of assurance of faith.
 - The use of phrases such as “I felt I did trust in Christ” in the present tense point to a recognition of a pre-existing, rather than new, condition.
- It is a Methodist distinctive.
 - Wesley: “It concerns the Methodist to clearly understand, explain and defend this doctrine because it is one grand part of the testimony which God has given them to bear to all mankind. It is by his particular, or peculiar blessing, upon them in searching the Scripture, that by the experience of His children, this great evangelical truth has been recovered, for which was lost and forgotten for many years”
 - H.B Workman: “The doctrine of the assurance of faith, or the witness of the Spirit was the fundamental contribution of Methodism to the life and thought of the church. If God called or raised the Methodist church, it was for this teaching, because it had been forgotten”
- More importantly, this assurance of faith is witnessed by Scripture, as spoken about in Romans 8:16.

“Witness of the Spirit”, 19 May 2019, Aldersgate Sunday (Recorded by Alyssa Lim)

- We should receive it because God has promised it.
- “The witness of the Spirit is the privilege of all God’s children” – Wesley

B. Understanding and being sure of the Witness of the Spirit

- The witness of the Spirit is “an inward impression on the soul, whereby the spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am child of God. That Jesus Christ loved me and gave Himself for me, and that I, even I am reconciled to God” – Wesley
- It is not just a feeling, but a deep conviction. It is knowledge of both mind and heart that we are God’s children forgiven. This is the assurance of faith offered in Scripture. It is not merely cognitive, and it is not so much emotional as experiential, and promised in Scripture to all who are God’s children, through the work of the Holy Spirit in our life.
- However, Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us that knowledge in the heart is subject to self-deception, for “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked”.
- How can we prevent self-deception? There must be external objective marks and criteria to support this. Colin William writes that when these criteria are present, there is then no delusion/we have not deceived ourselves:
 - Repentance and conviction of sin
 - Change in life
 - Presence of Christian character (Fruit of the Spirit)
 - Something new in the outward life
 - Assurance is the witness of the spirit that we are forgiven (*justified*) and that we are children of God (*adoption*)

C. Remembering the Witness of the Spirit

- This doctrine is important because in some Christian traditions, it is taught that one does not know whether one is saved until one gets to heaven.
- Hence, there are songs that remind us of this assurance of faith:
 - *Arise, my soul arise* – With confidence I now draw nigh, and “Father, Abba, Father,” cry
 - *Spirit of Faith come down* (written by Wesley) - Inspire the living faith that who so ever believes, the witness in themselves they have, and consciously believe
- When we hear an altar call, we think the more we put up our hand, the more “sure” our salvation will be. That is not Christian assurance, it is Christian insurance! It is characteristic of Singaporean Christianity (kiasu). But it is also because we have disregarded the doctrine of what Wesley calls “the witness of the Spirit”
- Rev Melvin Huang’s “8up” philosophy:
 - It is not whether you put your hands up, stand up, go up or come up.
 - It is about whether you build up, keep up, grow up and most importantly, where you end up.
- If you have this assurance of faith, share it with others.