

West Valley Church
5/15/2011

**Elemental Faith:
Wind, Part Three
Wind Power**

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Some of you know that I spent a little time working for the Oregon State Police. I didn't do it long enough to have the kinds of traumatic experiences that many police officers have to endure, but I can tell you I remember vividly my first fatal situation. It was on the Oregon coast at a State Park called Beverly Beach. I had gotten the call that an elderly gentleman had passed out and possibly was having a heart attack. I was only a couple miles away, so I took the call and raced to the park. It took me a little while to find him, but when I did, it appeared he had already passed. But no one had been there to provide any CPR, so I immediately made an attempt to do so. There was no pulse and his lips and skin were already changed in color. So I did the chest compressions and forced my breath into his lungs, only to hear it escape back out. I wanted so badly for his lungs to stay inflated; for his own breath to take over, but it wouldn't happen. The breath of life I tried so desperately to force into him just leaked back out as air and never became life. By this time another officer had arrived, but we finally had to give up. I stepped back, realizing that without that breath of his own, this body in front of me was nothing more than a shell, a lifeless machine, like a parked car or an empty building.

Breath is life to our bodies, and the breath of God is the Spirit of Life to our spirits. That's what we are going to look at as we conclude this part of our "Elemental Faith" series on the element of wind.

We started this series back in March by first getting a biblical view of ourselves using the element of "earth." Then we learned about Jesus by using the biblical metaphor of "water," concluding on Easter that only Jesus satisfies our deepest thirst. In this series on "wind" we are learning about the Holy Spirit—that he is a distinct part and person of the Trinity, and that he alone can work powerfully, or destructively, for our growth in Christ-likeness (depending upon our response to Him). Today we conclude our series on wind power by seeing how the breath of God is a vital part of that growth in the Holy Spirit in our lives. If you want that abundant, full, and real life that God has created you for and promises is yours in Him, than you want the Holy Spirit in your life. If you are a Christian and your deepest desire is to grow to be more and more like Jesus (which is the desire of

every authentic believer), than you want the Holy Spirit in your life. If you want Christ-like character and attitudes—things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, than you want what the Bible calls the “Fruit of the Spirit—you want the Holy Spirit in your life. Without Him, you are spiritually like a shell, a lifeless machine, like a parked car or an empty building. So let’s look at the wind, the Holy Spirit, the breath of God. The first reason we need the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, is because

1. The Breath of God is *Life*.

We talked about this in the first part of our series on “earth” so you can always go to our website and download previous messages, either audio or text, and get caught up. But we’ll do a quick review here: when God first created man and woman, he formed us out of the earth: “The LORD God took a handful of soil and made a man. God *breathed life* into the man, and the man *started breathing*.” (Genesis 2:7, *cev italics added*) In the “earth” series we focused on what we were made from—the soil of the earth. This time I want us to focus on the second part of that verse: that God breathed life into the man, and the man started breathing. We are talking about a divine mouth-to-mouth here. Except instead of reviving life, which is what you and I would try to do with CPR, God *created* life where there was no life to begin with. God did it with the breath of life. Granted, all living things have been given the breath of life: “And I have given the green plants as food for everything else that breathes. These will be food for animals, both wild and tame, and for birds.” (Genesis 1:30, *cev*)

Now the word that is used to describe mankind is the same word that is used to describe animals—it can be translated as “creatures.” The point is that we as people have a lot of similarities with all animals, at least physically. So when scientists and biologists say that our genetics and DNA are very similar to that of many animals, there is a biblical basis for it: we *are* very similar, physically anyway, in our basic blueprints of genetic structure. But there is one significant difference that sets us apart from all the rest of creation: humans are created in the very image of God Himself: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27, *niv*)

The Message Bible says it more specifically: “God created human beings; he created them godlike, Reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female.” (Genesis 1:27, *the message*) We were created in a different way and for a different purpose and to be in a different relationship with the Creator than all the rest of creation.

God breathed into us His own Spirit **for the purpose of *God-likeness*** - to be in his image, his nature. Like Him. That breath of God that was breathed into us at

creation, that we carry to this day, is the image and likeness of God. At that moment that he breathed into our lungs, God set eternity in our hearts. And it was God's Spirit that did it: "God's spirit made me and gave me life." (Job 33:4, gnb) We were made immortal by the Spirit of God's presence in our lives. We have a beginning, unlike God who does not, but like God, we do not have an ending. We will live forever. The original plan was that we would live forever in God's presence, carrying and reflecting the image and nature of God. But we were never meant to *be* gods, only *like* God. The notion that we could BE gods was the lie of the devil that we believed in the Garden. That was the original sin. So we bought into that lie (or should I say we "bit" into that lie) and sinned. And from that moment we had another eternal option in front of us: eternal still, but separated from God. Still alive forever, but now heading for hell and eternal punishment.

The Spirit and Presence of God was removed from within our lives when we were cast out of the Garden, away from God's internal presence. The curse, the result of sin was that "you (will) return to the dust of the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return. . . So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden. . ." (Genesis 3:19, 23, niv) We were removed from His presence internally, and potentially eternally.

Once Adam and Eve sinned, sin became an inbred part of our spiritual nature and DNA that we could not change. Sin became our first response whenever faced with a moral choice. It was our nature. And our consequence. But God loved us still so much that he sent his One and only Son to die in on the cross in our place—a death we deserved and he did not, to give us a life that he deserved and we did not. He bought us out of sin by paying with his life for us, so that we could be restored to relationship with God. The problem is that that price did pay for our sin, but still didn't change our nature or our spirits. So once again the Spirit went back to work. You see,

2. The Breath of God is *Spirit*

God's desire has been to do more than just buy us out of sin; he wanted to return or restore us to our original potential. *Our* nature and character are not capable of that on our own. God knew this and knows this, so he planned to return His Spirit to dwelling within us: "I'll put my Spirit in you and make it possible for you to do what I tell you and live by my commands." (Ezekiel 36:27, the message)

In order to be able to do that, we first needed to be cleansed. That's why we needed Christ's sacrifice first, so that *then* the Holy Spirit could fill us. Jesus tried to explain this to his disciples after they had shared their last supper and before he was arrested and crucified. He told them that he was going to be taken away from them and be killed. Then he said: "Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none

of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” (John 16:5-11, niv)

For us to be restored to our original position and potential, there was a sequence: first Jesus died in our place so that we could be forgiven of our sin when we ask God to. That gave us a new start, a clean slate. We are literally like being “born again,” Jesus said we had to be born of water *and the Spirit*. Then, if we submit to him, the Holy Spirit can move into our lives, filling us with His presence. That’s why, after Jesus had been crucified, was dead and buried, and then rose from the dead, and had made appearances to people, the Gospel of John records this event: “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you.’ Then he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” (John 20:21-22, gnb)

Do you see that? Jesus, who is God, breathed on his disciples. The breath of God is the Spirit of God. So he was telling them that they would soon be filled with the Holy Spirit, because the sacrifice of the Son had been made for them and us. That promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples were waiting and praying in that upper room. The Bible says that:

“When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.” (Acts 2:1-4, gnb)

The reason that the breath of God is the Spirit is **for the purpose of God-fullness**.

God desires to breathe into us his Spirit so that we can be filled to the fullness of him. That’s the prayer that the Apostle Paul prayed for the believers in Jesus at the church in Ephesus, and is a prayer for you and me:

“I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you power through his Spirit to be strong in your inner selves, and I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, so that you, together with all God's people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love. Yes, may you come to know his love---although it can never be fully known---and so be *completely filled with the very nature of God*.” (Ephesians 3:16-19, gnb, italics added) Filled with God’s Spirit!

As we've said for the last two Sundays, we need to ask God to fill us with his Spirit, and he is eager to do so. Jesus said very plainly:

"As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13, gnb)

The Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who do what? To those who do what? To those who do what? Have you asked him? You will have that opportunity in a moment. God wants to fill you with His presence.

So once we've been filled with the Holy Spirit, we need to grow in that fullness—grow more and more like Jesus. And God has given us a powerful way for that to happen, and that is through His Word. What makes the Word so powerful is that

3. The Breath of God is Word

The Bible, the Scripture that we have, is the Word of God, and we believe that it has been inspired by God Himself. It wasn't written merely by men—it was written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Peter wrote: "We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:19-21, tniv)

It is the Holy Spirit who inspired the writings of Scripture that we have. That's why the Apostle Paul wrote this: "you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that all God's people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:15-17, tniv)

The Bible has been breathed by God. What is the breath of God? The Holy Spirit. So the Bible, God's Word, is empowered by the breath of God which is . . . The Holy Spirit! That makes God's Word very powerful to work in and through your life. That means that the Holy Spirit didn't just inspire the Word at its beginning—when it was written down—but that he continues to inspire it. He adds his supernatural power to it so that when we read it while praying sincerely about it, it will do powerful things in our lives and through our lives if we will open ourselves up to it. But that's the key—we've got to place the Word into our lives by reading it, studying it, allowing it be in our lives. That's why the 201 class that we offer

throughout the year is so important—we teach you how to get the God-breathed Word into your life if you don't know how.

When God's Word is willingly allowed into your life, the Holy Spirit will bring it alive in you. The Bible says, "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12, tniv)

It will come to life in you!

Now, remember, we started out having the Spirit's breath of life in us for Godlikeness. Then, thanks to the work of Christ on the cross, we can ask the Breath of the Holy Spirit to fill us so that we can have God-fullness. The reason that we have the God-breathed Word is in that passage we read earlier: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that all God's people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17, tniv). See that last part? Righteousness, that we can be thoroughly equipped for every good work. That means that we are acting rightly, or righteously (just like God would act), carrying out the work of God in the world—just as God would do. That means that the breathed-word of God is **for the purpose of Godliness**.

And that brings us full circle—back to living out, carrying and reflecting the character and nature of God into this world.

That's why Jesus said what he did as he breathed on his disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit: he said "just as God sent me, now I am sending you." (John 20:21, gnb) That means we are sent out into this world. OK, but to do what?

Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20, tniv)

So we are sent out into the world to tell others about how much God loves them and what he's done for them, that they might put their faith in Him, too. And we back up what we say by how we live, because we have the Spirit of God in us.

That's why Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8, niv)

God wants you to carry and reflect his nature, by the power of the Holy Spirit, into a world filled with people who need to be restored to their original design and

potential.

What about you? Do you have the very breath of God in your life? It's the only way for you to reach your original potential. It's what's missing in your life.

pray