

## **Almont Vineyard Church – Week 4 Sermon Series: Witnesses of the Risen King**

May 16, 2026

### **Opening Monologue**

Greetings, AVC family and friends — and a warm welcome to all our new guests and those who have just downloaded the app! We're so glad you're here. You're going to get a lot out of this application.

Just a quick note: this is the sermon portion of the app. As you scroll down, you'll find spiritual reflections, commentary, and devotional questions connected to this week's message. There are many other great features on the AVC app as well — the best way to explore is to simply poke around and discover them. If you need any help, please don't hesitate to contact the church office. We'd be happy to assist you.

Several weeks ago, we began a sermon series titled "Witnesses of the Risen King." I didn't get to finish it at the time, so I'm excited to conclude it properly over the next couple of weeks. If you need to catch up, feel free to watch the previous messages on our YouTube channel or right here in the APP.

As we've already discovered, the church was never man's invention — it was established by Jesus Christ Himself. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus declared, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." He called twelve followers, gave them hands-on training, and then sent them out with authority and power to do the very works they had seen Him do (Matthew 10 and Luke 10).

It's easy to overlook this truth in our daily Christian lives: we are called to operate in the authority and power of Jesus Christ if we want to be effective witnesses for Him.

Have you ever felt completely powerless? In my sermon, I share a personal story about a time I was diving in a swift river current. The power of the water nearly swept me away. In that moment, I was utterly helpless. Sadly, many Christians today feel the same way when it comes to making disciples — they feel ineffective and powerless.

Even more troubling, some believers deny the power of God and try to accomplish the mission in their own strength and wisdom. The Apostle Paul directly confronted this attitude when he wrote: "Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking but what power they have. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." (1 Corinthians 4:18–20)

This Sunday, we're going to dive deeper into Jesus' words in the Great Commission and the often-overlooked instructions He gave His disciples in the Book of Acts. The bottom line is this: we need the power of the Holy Spirit actively working in our lives if we are going to "go and make disciples."

Jesus told them: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit... 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 1:4b-5, 8)

Join us this Sunday as we unpack this powerful biblical truth. Our prayer is that we would be filled with the Holy Spirit and fulfill the Great Commission — not in our own strength, but with the power and authority given to us to be Witnesses of the risen King.

In Christ,  
Rev. Pastor Brad

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**To Listen to this week’s Sermon: “Week 4 Sermon Series: Witnesses of the Risen King” Go to the Sermon tab here in our APP or use the links to our website or YouTube Channel where you can also listen to our Sermons:**

**Web:** <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

**You Tube:** <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

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### **Key Sermon Text**

#### **Matthew 16:18**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2016%3A18&version=NIV>

#### **1 Corinthians 4:18-21**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%204%3A18-21%20&version=NIV>

#### **2 Timothy 3:5**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%203%3A5%20&version=NIV>

#### **Matthew 28:18-20**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2028%3A18-20%20&version=NIV>

#### **Acts 2:17-18**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202%3A17-18%20&version=NIV>

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### **Commentary, Spiritual Applications, and Theological Reflections**

#### **Empowered Witnesses**

Jesus commands us to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19), but we cannot fulfill this mission in our own strength, wisdom, or willpower. To be effective witnesses of the Risen King, we must be filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

#### **The Church Is Built by Christ’s Power, Not Man’s**

From the very beginning, Jesus made it clear that the church was not man’s invention. In Matthew 16:18 He declared, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” He called twelve ordinary followers, gave them hands-on training, and then sent them out with authority and power to do the very works they had seen Him do (Matthew 10; Luke 9–10). Later, He appointed seventy-two others and sent them out with the same power and authority (Luke 10).

This pattern is repeated throughout the Gospels: Jesus never sent His disciples out to work in their own strength. He equipped them with His power.

### **The Danger of Denying God's Power**

Sadly, many Christians today try to live the Christian life and fulfill the Great Commission in their own strength. Some even deny the power of God while maintaining an outward form of godliness. The Apostle Paul confronted this exact attitude in the church at Corinth:

“Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking but what power they have. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.”

(1 Corinthians 4:18–20, NIV)

Paul's words are sobering. The kingdom of God is not advanced by impressive speech, human wisdom, or self-confidence. It advances through the demonstration of God's power.

This same warning appears later in 2 Timothy 3:5, where Paul describes people who have “a form of godliness but deny its power.” They look religious, but their lives show no real transformation because they are not relying on the Holy Spirit.

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### **The Essential Promise of the Holy Spirit**

Before ascending to heaven, Jesus gave His disciples clear instructions:

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit... 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 1:4b-5, 8, NIV)

The Great Commission cannot be fulfilled apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why Jesus told them to wait. Human effort alone is never enough. As the Lord declared through the prophet Zechariah:

“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6)

Our Calling as Empowered Witnesses

**As followers of the Risen King, we are called to be His witnesses — not in our own strength, but through the power of the Holy Spirit. This means:**

- Relying on the Spirit instead of our own cleverness or charisma.
- Operating in the same authority and power that Jesus gave His first disciples.
- Allowing the Holy Spirit to produce real transformation in our lives and through our witness.

When we try to do the work of the kingdom in our own power, we become frustrated, ineffective, and sometimes arrogant. But when we depend on the Holy Spirit, we become fruitful, bold, and truly effective witnesses.

Let us not settle for a form of godliness that denies the power of God. Instead, let us be Empowered

Witnesses of the Risen King — filled with His Spirit, walking in His authority, and advancing His kingdom wherever we go.

[Sources: 1-4]

## **An All-Inclusive Outpouring**

Don't we have a totally amazing God? We are created in His image and likeness, and though we are not mentioned by name in Scripture, it is both humbling and powerfully true that God has included us in His eternal plan.

Yes, Jesus came to earth as the Messiah, the Son of the living God. He established His church, declaring, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18). He called twelve ordinary followers, gave them hands-on training, and sent them out with authority and power to do the works they had seen Him do. That number quickly grew to seventy-two, and as the story of Christianity unfolds, we see a remarkable all-inclusive outpouring that began at Pentecost and continues to this day.

This outpouring is not limited to a select few. It includes young men and old men, women and children, people from every nation, tribe, and background. All of us get to participate in God's magnificent plan to carry out the Great Commission of our living God.

## **Peter's Response and the Inclusive Outpouring**

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out in dramatic fashion. Some in the crowd accused the disciples of being drunk. Peter stood up and refuted the charge, noting that it was only nine in the morning — far too early for anyone to be intoxicated. But his response went far beyond a simple denial. It was a bold proclamation of something revolutionary.

Peter explained what the crowd was witnessing by connecting it directly to the prophecy of Joel:

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy." (Acts 2:17-18)

This was truly an all-inclusive outpouring — not limited by gender, age, social class, or ethnic background. The key word is "all." The gift of the Holy Spirit is available to whomever God chooses, and the book of Acts shows this promise expanding to people from every nation.

The result was powerful. The disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke in languages they had never learned. Their prophetic praise and proclamation drew a massive crowd. Peter's Spirit-empowered sermon was so effective that three thousand people responded, repented, and were baptized that very day. This was not mere spiritual excitement — it was transformative power that produced concrete results.

The disciples were not drunk on wine. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, and that same power is available to us today.

## **Our Place in God's Plan**

What an incredible privilege! The same Holy Spirit that was poured out at Pentecost is still being poured out today. We are not spectators in God's story — we are participants. Young and old, men and women, every background and every nation are invited to receive His power and join in fulfilling the Great Commission.

This is the heart of being witnesses of the Risen King. We do not go in our own strength or wisdom. We go in the power of the Holy Spirit — just as Jesus promised:

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...” (Acts 1:8)

### **(Sources: 5-9)**

#### The Spirit's Promise, the Spirit's Power, and the Spirit's People: A Biblical Progression

Jesus's teaching on the Holy Spirit in John 14–17 centers on the Spirit's coming at Pentecost to indwell believers and unite them to Christ. Though Jesus would depart, he promised not to leave his disciples orphaned but to come to them through the *paraklētos*—the Holy Spirit. This sending would follow Jesus's resurrection and ascension, since the Spirit could not be given until Jesus was glorified.

In the upper room, Jesus explained that the Spirit would lead the apostles into all truth, teaching them things they were unable to understand at that time. More fundamentally, the Spirit would indwell believers and unite them to Christ. This reflects the theological concept of *perichorēsis*—the mutual indwelling of the three Trinitarian persons, where they occupy the same infinite divine space. When the Spirit comes, he will indwell Jesus's disciples, enabling them to know that Christ is in the Father, they are in Christ, and Christ is in them.

Old Testament believers anticipated a future day when God's Spirit would dwell permanently among them—and within them all. The prophets spoke of the Messiah on whom the fullness of the Spirit would rest, and who would pour out the Spirit on the people. According to the New Testament, these hopes were fulfilled in Jesus, the anointed one uniquely endowed by the Spirit. From conception through resurrection, the Spirit was at work in Christ's life—responsible for his conception, endowing him at his baptism, and raising him from the dead.

As the one uniquely endowed by the Spirit, Jesus was the one through whom the outpouring of the Spirit would come, as John the Baptist proclaimed when he said Jesus would baptize his followers in the Spirit. Jesus promised his disciples the full measure of the Spirit as living water, and after his departure, the Father would send another Advocate to empower them for mission—teaching them, reminding them of his instructions, guiding them into truth, and assisting them as Christ's witnesses.

Jesus called the Spirit “another Helper,” indicating a ministry like his own—not a vague impersonal energy but a real person who would be as present in the unseen realm as Jesus was in Galilee, representing the real presence of their Lord. Just as Jesus had led them when together, the Spirit would now guide them, answer their questions, teach them, help them pray, give them words to speak, and enable them to do Christ's work—even greater works. The ultimate purpose of all the Spirit's work is to lift up the Son, for the Spirit glorifies Christ by taking what is his and declaring it to believers.

Jesus breathed on the disciples saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit”—a deliberate allusion to Genesis 2:7, where God creates humanity by breathing life into Adam. What Yahweh did in the Old Testament to create humanity, the glorified Jesus does to create a new humanity with new life by his breath. The community founded by Jesus at the cross is now empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish God’s mission, with the commissioning naturally followed by empowerment.

The glorious fulfillment of this promise occurred at Pentecost, when the exalted Lord poured out the Spirit on his followers. Pentecost was no mere passing occasion but a milestone in God’s salvation history, marking the Spirit’s unique entry into the world and inaugurating the age of fulfillment. The disciples saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them, and all were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Peter explained this as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy—a general outpouring of the Spirit on all believers, contrasting with the Old Testament pattern where the Spirit was given only to kings, priests, and prophets.

The outpouring signaled the birth of the Spirit-endowed, Spirit-empowered, Spirit-led community—the church—and commenced the age of the church’s mission, with the Spirit now focusing his work on this new community. Pentecost was not limited to the disciples present that day but embraces all believers in every nation and generation, who now enjoy the Spirit’s presence forming them into one fellowship and enabling them to participate in the fullness of the Spirit through union with Christ. The task of bearing witness to Jesus would be impossible for the church without the power of the Holy Spirit. (Scriptures: John 14-16, Joel 2:28-29, Isaiah 11:2, Isaiah 61:1-2, Jeremiah 31:33-34, Matthew 3:11, John 20:22, Acts 2:1-4 & 16-21)

(Sources: 10-14)

## **1 Corinthians 4:18–21**

### **A Father’s Stern yet Loving Warning Against Arrogant Talk Without God’s Power**

In these closing verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 4, the Apostle Paul shifts back to a tone of firm, pastoral sternness. He has just urged the Corinthian believers to imitate him as a spiritual father and has sent Timothy to remind them of his ways in Christ. Now he directly addresses a troubling attitude that has taken root in the church during his absence.

4:18 “Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you.”

The Greek word translated “puffed up” (*physioō*) carries the vivid image of something inflated or swollen with pride—like a balloon ready to burst. Paul uses this same term earlier in the chapter (4:6) to describe the divisive, self-important spirit that had fractured the congregation. Certain influential members—possibly self-appointed leaders or eloquent teachers—had grown arrogant. They assumed Paul would never return in person. Perhaps they pointed to his change of travel plans, his apparent “weakness” in bodily presence, or his lack of impressive rhetorical style as evidence of fear or inadequacy (see 2 Corinthians 10:10; 1 Corinthians 2:1–5). “When the cat’s away, the mice will play,” they seemed to think. With Paul far away in Ephesus, they felt free to promote themselves, speak loftily, and behave as they

pleased without accountability. Their arrogance not only undermined Paul’s apostolic authority but also foreshadowed the even more serious issues of moral compromise that Paul will confront head-on in chapter 5.

4:19 “But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power.”

Paul firmly counters their assumption. He fully intends to visit Corinth again soon—yet always with the humble qualification “if the Lord wills.” This reflects the apostle’s deep dependence on God’s sovereignty; even his travel plans were submitted to the will of the Lord Jesus (see James 4:13–15; Acts 18:21). When he arrives, Paul will not be impressed or deceived by impressive speeches, clever arguments, or rhetorical skill. In the Greco-Roman world of Corinth, oratory and philosophical eloquence were highly prized. But Paul declares he will examine something far more important: the genuine power (*dunamis*) at work in their lives and ministry.

This “power” is not worldly force or personal charisma. Throughout 1 Corinthians, Paul has contrasted human wisdom and eloquent words with the true power of God revealed in the message of the cross (1:18, 24; 2:4–5). He came to them initially “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” not with superior speech. Now he wants to see whether these arrogant ones possess the same divine effectiveness—the transforming, holy, kingdom-advancing power of the Holy Spirit—or whether their Christianity is all talk.

#### **4:20 “For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.”**

This is one of the few places Paul uses the phrase “kingdom of God” in his letters. Here it does not primarily refer to the future millennial reign of Christ or the eternal state, but to the present reign of God in the lives of believers. The kingdom is not merely a set of doctrines to debate or beautiful words to recite. It is a living reality marked by the dynamic, supernatural power of the Holy Spirit at work—producing holiness, love, unity, conviction of sin, spiritual gifts exercised for the common good, and transformed character that reflects Christ.

The Corinthians were surrounded by a culture that valued philosophical debate and skillful speech. Some in the church had imported that worldly value system into their faith. They could talk eloquently about spiritual things, yet their lives showed little evidence of the fruit of the Spirit or the convicting, cleansing power of the gospel. Paul insists there is a vast difference between knowing the right words and living them out in the power of God. As Jesus taught, the kingdom is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17). It is evidenced by changed hearts, obedient lives, and the mighty working of God that cannot be explained by mere human effort (see also Galatians 5:22–23; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:3–8). Empty talk may impress people for a moment, but only God’s power can truly transform individuals and build His church.

#### **4:21 “What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?”**

Paul now appeals to them with fatherly wisdom. He has already called the Corinthians his “beloved children” whom he begot through the gospel (4:14–15). A good father does not delight in punishing his children; he longs to come to them with affection and gentle instruction. Yet genuine love sometimes requires correction and discipline when children stray. The “rod” (*rhabdos*) here is a metaphor drawn

from Old Testament wisdom literature, where the rod of correction is an act of love meant to deliver a child from folly and destruction (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13–14). It pictures firm, authoritative reproof and discipline aimed at restoration, not destruction.

Paul presents the Corinthians with a clear choice. Their response to this letter—and to the visit of Timothy—will determine how he comes. If they repent of their arrogance, divisions, and tolerance of sin, he can come “in love and a spirit of gentleness,” continuing his ministry of encouragement and building up. But if they remain puffed up and defiant, he is prepared to come with the rod of apostolic discipline—exercising the authority Christ gave him for the edification of the church, even when it requires painful confrontation (2 Corinthians 13:10). This discipline is never arbitrary or vengeful; it flows from the same fatherly heart that desires their maturity in Christ.

In these verses, Paul models the balanced heart of a true spiritual leader: tender affection combined with unflinching commitment to truth and holiness. He does not relish confrontation, yet he refuses to abandon his God-given responsibility. The kingdom of God advances not through human cleverness or self-promotion, but through humble dependence on the Spirit’s power. Arrogance and empty boasting have no place among God’s people.

This transitional section skillfully leads into the bold confrontation of chapter 5, where Paul addresses the shocking sexual immorality being tolerated—and even boasted about—within the church. The same root of pride and lack of spiritual power underlies both the arrogance Paul addresses here and the moral failure that follows.

Ultimately, Paul desires for his spiritual children in Corinth what every faithful father desires: genuine growth, holiness, and lives that visibly display the reign and power of God. May we, too, examine our own hearts. Are we content with eloquent talk about faith, or do we hunger for the real, transforming power of the Holy Spirit in our daily walk? When spiritual authority brings correction, do we respond with humility or with puffed-up resistance? The choice, as Paul makes clear, shapes whether we experience the gentle guidance of a loving Father—or the necessary rod of discipline that seeks to restore us to the path of life.

(Sources: 15-16)

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## **2 Timothy 3:1–9 (with emphasis on verse 5) – Perilous Times in the Last Days: A Form of Godliness but Denying Its Power**

Paul, writing from prison near the end of his life, gives Timothy a sobering prophetic warning about the character of people in the “last days.” These days began at Pentecost (Acts 2:17) and will intensify as history moves toward the return of Christ. The apostle does not primarily describe external disasters such as wars, famines, or natural catastrophes—though those may occur. Instead, he focuses on the moral and spiritual decay caused by bad people who exhibit selfish, godless behavior even while maintaining a religious façade.

**2 Timothy 3:1 “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come.”**

The Greek word for “perilous” (chalepos) carries the idea of difficult, stressful, or even dangerous situations—like wild animals or a raging sea. These are not merely hard times; they are morally treacherous seasons marked by increasing wickedness. Paul wants Timothy (and every believer) to be discerning, not naive. As Charles Spurgeon observed, some Christians expect a golden age of progress, but Scripture warns of growing pandemonium apart from Christ’s return. Believers must learn to “discern the signs of the times” (Matthew 16:3) rather than being swept away by cultural optimism.

### **2 Timothy 3:2–4 Paul lists nineteen characteristics of people who will dominate these perilous times:**

“lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”

At the root is self-love—the enthronement of “me” instead of God. This is the opposite of the gospel, which calls for the obliteration of self-centeredness (Romans 12:3). From self-love flows love of money, prideful boasting, irreverence toward God (blasphemy), rebellion against authority (including parents), ingratitude, and a lack of natural family affection. People become slanderers, impulsive, savage, and haters of what is good. They are treacherous, reckless, conceited, and choose sensual pleasure over devotion to God. These traits are not limited to the secular world; they infiltrate society, media, politics, and sadly, even segments of the visible church.

### **2 Timothy 3:5 – The Heart of the Warning**

“...having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”

This is the climax and most sobering element. These individuals maintain an outward appearance (morphōsis) of religion—church attendance, religious language, moral posturing, perhaps even leadership roles—yet they deny the power that true godliness should produce.

- “Form of godliness” refers to an external shape or semblance of piety, like a beautiful shell with nothing alive inside. It is a “salad-bar” religion: people pick the comfortable parts of faith they like while rejecting the parts that demand obedience, repentance, or transformation. They may speak of God, pray publicly, or claim Christian identity, but their lives remain unchanged by the gospel.
- “Denying its power” does not mean they deny miracles or spiritual gifts in a narrow sense. Rather, they reject the transforming authority and dynamis (supernatural power) of genuine godliness to change the heart, control behavior, and produce holiness. The power of godliness is the Holy Spirit’s work that makes a person new—producing conviction of sin, repentance, self-control, love for God and others, and victory over fleshly desires (see Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 4:20; 2 Corinthians 5:17). These people want the benefits or appearance of faith without submitting to its demands. Their religion has no real authority over their daily lives.

Examples abound across history and today: a pastor who preaches eloquently yet steals from the vulnerable; a Bible-study leader who teaches on marriage while living in adultery without remorse; churchgoers who sing worship songs on Sunday but live by the world’s values of greed, gossip, and self-indulgence the rest of the week. They are spiritual counterfeits—religious in form, but powerless in reality. This mirrors the Pharisees Jesus condemned: “You clean the outside of the cup... but inside they are full

of robbery and self-indulgence” (Matthew 23:25–28). It also echoes the false teachers who would later infiltrate households, captivating weak-willed people through manipulation (vv. 6–7).

Paul commands Timothy—and us—to turn away from such people. Association with them brings danger of corruption (“Evil company corrupts good habits,” 1 Corinthians 15:33). Discernment is essential; we must not be impressed by outward religiosity when the fruit of the Spirit is absent (Galatians 5:22–23).

## **2 Timothy 3:6–9**

Paul describes how these impostors operate: they creep into households and make captives of gullible people (often emotionally vulnerable women) loaded down with sins and led by various lusts. They are “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Their minds are depraved, and they resist the truth like Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses in Egypt (Exodus 7–8)—using counterfeit signs or clever arguments empowered by demonic influence (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 11:13–15). Yet their folly will eventually become evident to all, just as the Egyptian magicians’ resistance failed. Evil men and impostors will grow worse, deceiving and being deceived, but God’s truth will prevail.

### **Life Application Insights (drawing from Barton / Life Application Bible Commentary tradition)**

The Life Application approach emphasizes practical response. In a culture that prizes self-esteem, materialism, and pleasure, Paul’s list reads like today’s headlines. Yet the greatest danger is not the openly wicked, but those who cloak their self-centeredness in religious language. True godliness is never powerless—it produces changed lives, holy living, and kingdom fruit. We must examine ourselves: Do we have only the outward form (attendance, vocabulary, rituals), or do we daily yield to the Holy Spirit’s transforming power? Are we lovers of pleasure or lovers of God? The antidote is not hiding or despair, but continuing in the Scriptures (as Paul urges Timothy in vv. 10–17), which are God-breathed and able to equip us for every good work. Scripture convicts, corrects, and trains us in righteousness so that the power of godliness becomes real in us.

This passage echoes themes Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 4:18–21—where he contrasted “fancy talk” with living by God’s power. Empty profession without the Holy Spirit’s dynamic work leads to arrogance, division, and moral failure. In both letters, Paul calls the church to authentic, Spirit-empowered Christianity rather than religious performance.

### **Broader Biblical and Historical Context**

Throughout church history, this warning has proven true. From early Gnostic-like heretics to medieval corruptions, from Enlightenment rationalism to modern prosperity-focused or culturally accommodating movements, the pattern repeats: outward religiosity without the cross-shaped power of repentance and holiness. Yet God always preserves a faithful remnant who know both the form and the power—people like Timothy, who followed Paul’s doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, and endurance through persecution (vv. 10–11).

### **Practical Application for Today**

**1. Discernment: Learn to recognize the signs—not to judge harshly, but to protect yourself and others from deception.**

**2. Self-Examination: Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Is your faith mere appearance, or is God’s power actively at work in you (producing love, self-control, and hatred of sin)?**

**3. Turn Away: Limit close fellowship with those who persistently deny the power through their lifestyle, while still praying for their repentance.**

**4. Cling to Scripture: The God-breathed Word is the anchor that makes us “wise for salvation” and thoroughly equipped.**

**5. Hope in Christ: Perilous times will come, but they do not have the final word. Jesus builds His church, and the gates of hell will not prevail.**

May we be among those who not only have the form of godliness but walk daily in its resurrection power—transformed from self-lovers into God-lovers who reflect Christ in a darkening world.

(Sources:17-18)

### **Acts 1:4–8**

Waiting for the Promise of the Father: The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Power for Witness

In the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, the risen Lord Jesus appeared repeatedly to His disciples, giving them “many convincing proofs” that He was alive and speaking to them about the kingdom of God. During one of these intimate gatherings—while He was eating a meal with them—Jesus delivered final instructions that would shape the entire mission of the early church and, by extension, the church throughout history.

“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’” (Acts 1:4–5, NKJV)

Jesus issued a clear command: Stay in Jerusalem and wait. This waiting was not passive idleness but an act of obedient expectation. The disciples had nothing else to do until the Holy Spirit came. Jesus knew that apart from the Spirit’s empowering presence, all their efforts would be ineffective for the kingdom.

Waiting carried deep spiritual lessons:

- It showed that the promise was worth waiting for—something of supreme value.
- It reminded them they had a reliable promise from the Father Himself.
- It taught them they could not manufacture or create this reality on their own; it had to be received.
- It tested their patience and faith, even if only for a short time.

This “Promise of the Father” was none other than the coming of the Holy Spirit—the same Counselor Jesus had spoken of in the Upper Room discourses (John 14:16–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7–15). The Trinity is beautifully woven into these words: the Father promises, the Son announces and sends, and the Spirit comes as the Gift.

Jesus contrasted this new reality with John the Baptist’s ministry. John baptized with water as an outward sign of repentance—an acknowledgment of sin and a commitment to live differently. It prepared hearts

for the Messiah but did not impart salvation or inner transformation. Now Jesus announced a far greater baptism: “You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

To be “baptized” means to be immersed, submerged, or covered over. Just as John immersed people in water, the disciples would soon be immersed in the Holy Spirit. This was not merely a one-time event for a select few but the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy for all God’s people in the new covenant era:

- “I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring...” (Isaiah 44:3)
- “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts... I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31–34)
- “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you... I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees” (Ezekiel 36:26–27)
- “I will pour out my Spirit on all people... Even on my servants, both men and women” (Joel 2:28–29)

The prophets also spoke of purifying fire (Isaiah 4:4; Malachi 3:2). At Pentecost (Acts 2), the Holy Spirit would come with tongues of fire, purifying, refining, and empowering believers. This baptism would not be two separate experiences (water and Spirit/fire are linked under one article in the Greek) but a single transforming work that changes the entire person from the inside out—replacing a heart of stone with a heart of flesh and enabling obedience empowered by God Himself.

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Jesus’ physical departure was necessary for the gospel’s spread. While on earth in bodily form, He could be in only one place at a time. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, He would be spiritually present everywhere with every believer—comforting, guiding into truth, reminding them of His words, supplying the right words to speak, and filling them with divine power. The coming of the Spirit would mark the birth of the church as a new covenant community.

The disciples, still thinking in largely national and political terms, asked, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (v. 6). Jesus gently redirected their focus: “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (vv. 7–8).

The Father retains authority over the timing of prophetic events, including the full restoration of Israel. The disciples’ immediate calling was not speculation about the end times but empowered witness. The Greek word for “power” here is *dunamis*—the same root for “dynamite.” This was not human strength or clever strategy but supernatural enablement from the Holy Spirit. Their mission would unfold in concentric circles: beginning in Jerusalem (the center of Jewish life), extending to Judea and Samaria (overcoming prejudice and reaching “half-Jews”), and reaching to the ends of the earth (the Gentile world). This outline becomes the structural framework for the entire book of Acts.

### **Life Application: Sitting in Christ’s School of Discipleship**

Through the pages of Scripture, we today can sit with the resurrected Christ in His school of discipleship. By believing in Him, we receive the same Holy Spirit—the Promise of the Father—and the same power to become new people. By joining with other believers in the church, we participate in doing His work on earth. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is best understood not merely as a past experience but as an

ongoing condition: Are we living immersed in the Spirit's presence and power, or are we attempting kingdom work in our own strength?

Waiting on God's timing is rarely easy, yet it is essential. The disciples waited in obedience, and when the Spirit came at Pentecost, the results were explosive. In our own lives, we must learn to wait with eager anticipation, confident that the Father's promises are good, reliable, and meant for all His children. True effectiveness in ministry flows not from human zeal alone but from being clothed with power from on high.

This passage echoes the broader biblical theme of genuine spiritual power versus mere outward form. Just as Paul would later contrast "word" with "power" in 1 Corinthians 4:20 and warn against a "form of godliness" that denies its power (2 Timothy 3:5), Jesus here establishes that the church's mission depends entirely on the dynamic, transforming reality of the Holy Spirit. Without Him, we have only religious activity; with Him, we become effective witnesses to the risen Christ to the ends of the earth. (Sources: 19-20)

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## **Acts 2**

### **The Miracle at Pentecost: The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the Birth of Empowered Witness**

Everything in Acts chapter 1 prepared the way for this explosive moment. The disciples had spent forty days with the risen Lord, receiving teaching about the kingdom of God, the commission to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth, and the promise of the Holy Spirit's empowering baptism (Acts 1:4-5, 8). After Jesus' ascension, they obeyed by waiting together in prayer (1:14). On the day of Pentecost—the Jewish Festival of Weeks, fifty days after Passover and a time of first fruits harvest—the promise was dramatically fulfilled.

#### **The Coming of the Spirit (2:1-4)**

When the day of Pentecost arrived, the believers (likely the full group of about 120, including women as Joel's prophecy would soon indicate) were all together in one place, probably the upper room where they had been praying. Suddenly, two striking signs announced the Spirit's arrival:

- A sound like the rushing of a violent wind (or mighty breath) came from heaven and filled the entire house. In both Hebrew and Greek, the word for "spirit" (ruach / pneuma) also means "wind" or "breath." This echoed Old Testament images of God's life-giving breath, such as the wind/Spirit bringing life to dry bones in Ezekiel 37.
- What appeared to be tongues of fire separated and came to rest on each of them. Fire often symbolized God's holy presence in Scripture (Exodus 3:2; 19:18; 1 Kings 18:38). Here the fire divided, with a tongue resting on each individual, signifying that the same Spirit empowered every believer personally.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (languages) as the Spirit enabled them. This was not something they manufactured; the Spirit gave both the power and the words. From this point forward in Acts, the gift of the Spirit becomes the normal experience of every new believer—sometimes described as being "baptized," "poured out," "coming upon," or simply "received."

While later fillings occur for special boldness or ministry (e.g., Acts 4:8, 31), this initial filling marks the permanent indwelling that unites God with His people.

The phenomenon of speaking in “other tongues” here appears to be a miracle of intelligible foreign languages (using the word *dialektos* for known dialects in vv. 6, 8). Galilean believers—simple, uneducated men from a region looked down upon—were enabled to declare the wonders of God in the native languages of the international crowd. This was inspired, prophetic speech (the rare Greek verb used can mean “to utter with gravity” or “prophecy”), not the unintelligible ecstatic utterance Paul later regulates in 1 Corinthians 12–14. The result was audible, visible, and powerfully objective—an unmistakable sign that God had visited His people.

### **The Reaction of the Crowd (2:5–13)**

Devout Jews from every nation under heaven were living in Jerusalem at the time (likely Diaspora Jews who had returned to the holy city). When they heard the sound, a large crowd gathered in bewilderment. Each one heard these Galileans speaking in his or her own native language. The list of nations (Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, Cretans, and Arabs) represents a broad sweep of the Jewish Diaspora—essentially “every nation under heaven.” It foreshadows the gospel’s worldwide reach, beginning with Jews and proselytes but pointing forward to Samaritans, God-fearers, and Gentiles.

The crowd was utterly amazed and perplexed. “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” they asked. “How is it that we hear, each of us in our own native language... declaring the wonders of God?” Some were deeply moved and wondered what it all meant. Others scoffed, saying, “They are full of new wine”—the first hint of the skepticism and rejection that would repeatedly meet the gospel in Acts.

### **Major Themes and Significance**

Pentecost is often called the birth of the church. Just as the Holy Spirit had a prominent role in the infancy narratives of Luke’s Gospel—filling John, Elizabeth, Zechariah, and Simeon, and conceiving Jesus—so now the same Spirit unites God with His new covenant people. The visible, dramatic coming of the Spirit parallels Jesus’ own baptism and anointing, equipping the church for its mission as Jesus was equipped for His.

This event fulfills Old Testament promises of the Spirit being poured out on “all flesh” in the last days (Joel 2:28–29, quoted by Peter in vv. 16–21). It marks the dawn of the messianic age and the beginning of the church’s empowered witness. The miracle of languages reverses the confusion of Babel not by creating one universal tongue, but by enabling the gospel to cross every language barrier so that a unified people of God can form from every nation—united not by a common language but by confession of Jesus as Lord.

Pentecost was the festival of firstfruits; the 3,000 converts that follow (v. 41) represent the first harvest of the Spirit’s work. Yet the harvest did not end that day—it continues in ever-widening circles: Jerusalem → Judea and Samaria → the ends of the earth. The same Holy Spirit who empowered the early believers is available to every Christian today, not as a distant force but as the living presence of God within us.

## Life Application

The outward signs at Pentecost (wind and fire) were dramatic, but the real miracle was the inward transformation and outward empowerment for witness. We may not experience audible wind or visible fire, yet every believer receives the same Spirit at conversion. The question is not whether we have the Spirit, but whether we are daily being filled with and yielded to Him. Are we attempting to live the Christian life or do ministry in our own strength, or are we depending on the Spirit's power?

Like the disciples, we are called to wait on God in prayer when He says to wait, and to step out in bold witness when He empowers us. The Spirit's work produces praise, prophetic speech, and effective testimony that draws others to Christ—even when some mock. In a world still divided by language, culture, and ethnicity, the Pentecost miracle reminds us that the gospel is for every people group, and the Spirit equips ordinary believers to cross those barriers.

May we, like the first Christians, be so filled with the Holy Spirit that our lives and words declare the wonders of God in ways that cause people to ask, "What does this mean?"—opening the door for the clear proclamation of Jesus Christ.

(Sources: 21-22)

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## **Sermon Notes: Week 4 – Witnesses of the Risen King**

Happy Sunday to everyone... And welcome to those joining us online.

Several weeks ago I started a sermon series titled: "Witnesses of the Risen King" and today I want to continue where we left off...

Before we dive in... Let me share the AVC Connections... YouTube, App, Facebook/Website

[Let's Pray]

**As I stated early on in this series... The church was not man's invention... Jesus Christ established the church Jesus' words were... "You are Peter and on this rock I will establish my church, and the gates of Hades/Hell will not overpower it." (Matthew 16:18)**

Every Christian church is Jesus' church... Not man's... Man gets in the way.

As we discussed, Jesus called 12 disciples... Which quickly grew to 72 others...

**Jesus had trained His followers and sent them out to evangelize with power & authority... We must not underestimate the power & authority...**

**Jesus' words were: "I have given you authority to trample on snakes & scorpions and to overcome the power of the enemy..." (Luke 10:19-20) also (Matthew 10:7-8, Luke 10:2-3 & 17)**

Friends... This is easily overlooked to being witnesses of the Risen King...

**We need Christ's power to be effective disciples...**

**Have you ever felt powerless in something you were trying to do?**

**[Story of diving into Lake Huron River current/ Listen to the Sermon for the Full Story]**

Took up fresh water diving a couple years ago.

Whole new world — love it.

I was diving in Port Huron and towards the end of my dive I moved close to the Blue Water Bridge.

Dove down and current was not bad... When I got to the surface the strong current started to take me away.

Why do I tell you that story... Because there are powerless Christians trying to convert people by their own strength...

In Scripture I see two forms of religious people at work trying to win souls...

**1. – You have the religious leaders trying to convert people by using Scripture & to shame people into submission...**

**You know what Jesus called the religious leaders: (Short list)**

- Blind guides (Matthew 23:16, 24)
- Fools (Matthew 23:17)
- Whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23:27)
- Serpents (Matthew 23:33)

Sadly we have another group of people you could call Christians... They're guilty of denying God's power...

I want to read a couple of passages that mention this fact...

One passage is found in 1 Corinthians 4... But I can't pass up what theologian Rosner has to say about these group of Christians...

**I quote: "The Corinthian Christians became inflated with arrogance from the pretensions to possess wisdom, because other leaders seemed more polished & sophisticated." (Rosner, Pillar N.T. Commentary 194-195)**

Pastor so intelligent he became foolish & twisted God's Word.

**Apostle Paul said this to them:** "Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a whip, or in love and with a gentle spirit?" (1 Corinthians 4:18-21)

Timothy says... "People have a form of godliness but deny its power." (2 Timothy 3:5)

**Most Christians know what the Great Commission says in Matthew 28:**

**Jesus says: "Go make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the Father, Son & Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:18-20)**

Those words from Christ are spot on... "Go" – action on our part...

**There is more to the Great Commission from the mouth of Jesus that gets overlooked**

It's in the book of Acts... Chapter 1.

**Let's read it... Turn in your Bibles to Acts 1:4b-5 & 8.**

"On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ... 'But 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 1:4b-5, 8)

Holy Spirit is a gift.... We need the power of the Spirit.

**In Acts 2...** Jesus' words were fulfilled and at Pentecost the believers were filled with the Spirit...

Get this — the onlookers accused the people of being drunk (Acts 2:13 — note: original note said 5:15, corrected to context).

**Peter responded to their accusations...** “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.” (Acts 2:17-18)

**Friends... If you want to reach the lost you must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit...**

Closing Prayer

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## **Devotional Questions:**

### **1. Relying on Christ's Power vs. Our Own Strength**

Read Matthew 16:18 and Acts 1:8. In what areas of your Christian life or witness do you currently feel “powerless,” like Pastor Brad in the river current? How might Jesus' promise—“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you”—change your approach to making disciples this week? Pray specifically for fresh dependence on the Spirit rather than self-effort.

### **2. Examining Arrogance and Empty Talk**

Reflect on 1 Corinthians 4:18–20. Paul warns that the kingdom of God is “not a matter of talk but of power.” Where in your speech, social media, or church involvement might you be “puffed up” with impressive words but lacking demonstrated power? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any arrogance and replace it with humble reliance on God's *dunamis* (power).

### **3. Having a Form of Godliness but Denying Its Power**

Study 2 Timothy 3:5. Honestly evaluate your daily life: Do you maintain outward religious habits (church attendance, Bible reading, Christian language) while your heart, words, or actions show little transformation? What one practical step of repentance and surrender can you take today to invite the Holy Spirit's transforming power?

### **4. Waiting Obediently for the Spirit's Promise**

Consider Acts 1:4–5. The disciples were commanded to “wait” in Jerusalem. In our instant-results culture, where do you rush ahead in ministry or personal growth instead of waiting on the Father's gift? What does obedient waiting look like for you right now—perhaps extended prayer, fasting, or stillness—and how might it prepare you for greater fruitfulness?

### **5. Embracing the All-Inclusive Outpouring**

Meditate on Acts 2:17–18 and Joel's prophecy. God pours out His Spirit on “all people”—sons and daughters, young and old, servants and free. How does this inclusive promise encourage you personally, especially if you feel ordinary or unqualified? In what ways can you step into your role as a witness, knowing the same Spirit who empowered uneducated Galileans is available to you?

## **6. Living as True Witnesses in Concentric Circles**

From Acts 1:8, Jesus outlines witness beginning in Jerusalem, then Judea/Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Map this to your life: Who is in your “Jerusalem” (immediate family, coworkers, neighbors)? How are you actively depending on the Holy Spirit to cross cultural or relational barriers in your “Samaria”? What bold step of witness is He prompting?

## **7. Producing Kingdom Fruit Through the Spirit**

Compare Zechariah 4:6 (“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit”) with Galatians 5:22–23. List the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life right now. Where is love, joy, peace, patience, or self-control lacking because you’ve relied on human effort? How can daily yielding to the Holy Spirit make you a more attractive witness of the risen King?

## **8. Responding to Correction with Humility**

Paul offers the Corinthians a choice in 1 Corinthians 4:21—a rod or love and gentleness. When God brings conviction through Scripture, a sermon, or a fellow believer, how do you typically respond? What would it look like this week to humble yourself, repent quickly, and receive the Spirit’s gentle restoration so your witness remains powerful?

## **9. Declaring the Wonders of God Like Pentecost**

Acts 2 shows Spirit-filled believers declaring God’s wonders in languages the hearers understood. In your everyday conversations, how can you rely on the Holy Spirit to speak with clarity, boldness, and relevance to those around you? Pray for opportunities to share the gospel in ways that cause people to ask, “What does this mean?”