

Almont Vineyard Church

Week 5 Witnesses of the Risen King

May 30, 2026

Opening Monologue

Greetings, AVC family and friends — and a special welcome to everyone joining us for the first time or who recently downloaded the app! We're truly glad you're here with us. You're going to find a lot of value in this application.

Quick reminder: this is the sermon portion of the app. Keep scrolling and you'll discover spiritual reflections, commentary, and devotional questions tied to this week's message. There are so many other helpful features on the AVC app — the best way to find them is to explore and click around. If you get stuck or have questions, reach out to the church office. We're here to help.

Last week we picked back up our sermon series, "Witnesses of the Risen King." We saw how the Church was never a human idea — it was birthed by Jesus Himself. He promised to build His church and that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. We also looked at the serious problem many believers face today: feeling powerless when it comes to making disciples. We talked about the danger of trying to do the mission in our own strength and how Paul rebuked the arrogant who had "talk" but no power.

This week we continue pressing into the heart of what it actually means to be a witness of the risen King. Jesus didn't just tell His followers to "go." He gave them clear instructions about how to go — in the power of the Holy Spirit, with authority, and with a bold, undeniable testimony of what they had seen and heard.

Have you ever wondered why some Christians seem to carry a quiet confidence and spiritual effectiveness while others feel like they're just trying to survive spiritually? In this week's message, I share a personal story that highlights the difference between living in our own limited strength versus stepping into the supernatural empowerment Jesus promised.

We're going back to the words of the risen Jesus in the Great Commission and the final instructions He gave before ascending. We'll unpack what it really looks like to be His witnesses — not just in theory, but in everyday life, in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and to the ends of the earth.

The early church didn't wait for perfect conditions. They waited for the promised Holy Spirit — and when He came, everything changed. My prayer is that the same power that filled them would fill us afresh so we can fulfill our part in this same mission.

Join us as we conclude this powerful series. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to move in us so we can truly become effective Witnesses of the Risen King.

In Christ,
Rev. Pastor Brad

To Listen to this week's Sermon: "Week 5 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>

Key Sermon Text

Acts 2:17-21

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%20%3A17-21%20&version=NIV>

Mark 16:15-18

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2016%3A15-18%20&version=NIV>

Acts 2:38-39

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%20%3A38-39&version=NIV>

Acts 2: 42-47

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%20%3A%2042-47&version=NIV>

Commentary, Spiritual Applications, and Theological Reflections

“The Holy Spirit Speaks: Cultivating Intimacy with the Living God”

When is the last time you heard from the Holy Spirit?

I know that sounds strange to some. I am not speaking of an audible voice booming from heaven, but that gentle, persistent still small voice within—the inward witness that has guided God’s people across the centuries. Jesus Himself promised this divine Helper: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth... and he will declare to you the things that are to come” (John 16:13). This is no strange or foreign biblical concept. From the prophets of old to the apostles of the early church, the Holy Spirit has always been the active, speaking presence of God.

The Trinity and Our Relationship with the Spirit

More than that, I sense the Holy Spirit longs to speak to us today. Just as we intentionally grow our relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer, Scripture, and obedience, we must also grow our relationship with the Holy Spirit. Never forget: the Holy Spirit is God. He is fully God—the third Person of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He is not an impersonal force or influence, but a divine Person who can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19), or walked with in step-by-step fellowship.

If we are to be effective witnesses of the risen King Jesus, we must be guided, led, and inspired by the Holy Spirit. He empowers us to bear bold witness, leads us to the right people, and opens doors for the Gospel that no man can shut. Without His direction, our efforts remain mere human striving.

Scriptural Examples of the Holy Spirit Speaking (Short List- Not all Scriptures)

The Book of Acts—the historical record of the early church—overflows with examples of the Holy Spirit’s personal guidance:

- The Holy Spirit “told Philip” to approach the Ethiopian eunuch’s chariot (Acts 8:29), resulting in one of the most powerful conversion stories in Scripture.
- The Spirit “said to Peter” to go with the messengers from Cornelius without hesitation (Acts 10:19-20).
- He instructed Peter “to go without doubting” (Acts 11:12), breaking down centuries of religious and ethnic barriers.
- The Holy Spirit spoke directly to the church in Antioch, setting apart Barnabas and Saul for missionary work (Acts 13:1-3)—the launch of the church’s greatest expansion.
- He prevented Paul and his companions from preaching in the Province of Asia, redirecting them toward Europe and the Gospel’s westward advance (Acts 16:6-7).

These are not isolated incidents. The New Testament commands us to be “led by the Spirit” (Romans 8:14) and to “walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16-18, 25). This is the normal Christian life.

Additional Biblical and Historical Reflections

Throughout salvation history, God has spoken by His Spirit. In the Old Testament, the Spirit came upon judges, kings, and prophets—sometimes dramatically, often quietly. The same Spirit rested upon Jesus at His baptism (Matthew 3:16) and filled the early disciples at Pentecost with power for witness (Acts 1-2). Church history echoes this pattern: the desert fathers, the Celtic saints, the Reformers, and countless missionaries all testified to the Spirit’s inner leading. Even in the modern era, movements of revival and global missions have been birthed through believers who learned to discern His voice.

The Holy Spirit also convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8), comforts the broken, teaches us the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-12), and produces fruit in our lives—love, joy, peace, patience, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Spiritual Application: Learning to Hear and Follow

So how do we cultivate this relationship practically?

1. Saturate yourself in Scripture — The Spirit speaks most clearly through the Word of God. The still small voice will never contradict the Bible.

2. Live in prayerful dependence — Set aside quiet time to listen, not just speak. Ask, “Holy Spirit, what are You saying?”

3. Obey promptly— The more we respond to small promptings, the clearer His voice becomes.

4. Test the spirits — Weigh every inner impression against Scripture, the character of Christ, and wise counsel from mature believers (1 John 4:1).

5. Walk in step — Daily surrender: “Holy Spirit, lead me today. Guide my steps, my words, my decisions.”

Christians, the Holy Spirit is not distant. He dwells within every true follower of Jesus (Romans 8:9). He desires to speak, to comfort, to empower, and to send you forth as a witness. Will you quiet your heart today and say, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening”?

May the God who spoke creation into existence, who raised Christ from the dead, and who now dwells in you by His Spirit, fill you afresh with His presence and power.

(LOGOS Bible Commentary, Rev. Standest)

Mark 16:15-18

Jesus's command in Mark 16:15–18 stands as one of the most debated passages in contemporary Christianity, particularly regarding whether believers today should expect and practice the miraculous signs He promised.

The Command and Its Context

Jesus instructed His followers to “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” and promised that “these signs shall follow them which believe ... they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.” The miraculous signs were attached to the Great Commission itself, with the passage concluding that “They went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.” This structural connection between proclamation and supernatural authentication appears intentional—the signs were not incidental but integral to the evangelistic mission.

The Purpose of Miracles in Evangelism

Understanding why Jesus promised these signs is crucial. “Signs” function as supernatural events attesting the divine origin of the apostolic message, authenticating the faith the early believers proclaimed rather than the personal faith of any individual believer. The apostles understood that their preaching's power came not from eloquence but from the Holy Spirit manifesting His presence through miracles, healings, and signs in Jesus's name—which enabled them to speak with boldness and teach the world to fear God's name.

This distinction matters profoundly. Miracles served a communicative function in contexts where the gospel faced active resistance. The Word of God encountered as many difficulties in the apostolic era as it does today, with unbelief and opposition pressing from all sides, though modern indifference may prove more formidable than ancient hostility.

The Critical Disagreement: Continuationism vs. Cessationism

Here the search results reveal a fundamental theological split. Continuationism holds that all spiritual gifts, including healings, tongues, and miracles, remain operative today just as in the early church, with believers having access to all gifts mentioned in Scripture. This position finds support in the absence of any explicit biblical statement limiting such gifts to a particular time period. According to this view, the promise accompanying the command to preach cannot be separated from it, and nowhere in Scripture is this promise explicitly restricted to future times.

Conversely, cessationists argue that these authenticating signs were normative only for the apostolic era, pointing to historical evidence and passages like 2 Corinthians 12:12 and Hebrews 2:3–4 as support. From this perspective, extraordinary gifts appear limited to brief periods in biblical history where they served as confirmatory signs of new revelation and its ambassadors, establishing and defending God's kingdom in epochally significant ways. Cessationists believe God

ceased giving these gifts after the first century, as they authenticated apostolic authority and established the church's foundation—functions no longer necessary.

The Practical Application Question

Jesus was not promising that all believers would perform sign miracles simply because they believed; rather, He was telling His followers that when they preached the gospel, they could expect miracles to accompany their proclamation. This promise of miracles connects to the “greater works” of evangelism and soul-winning, with miraculous power displayed to verify God's word.

Yet a critical caveat emerges: Jesus performed His works through the Holy Spirit's power rather than His own, meaning believers need the Holy Spirit's power to expect miracles—and only when as dependent on the Spirit as Jesus was can they do the miracles He did.

The Unresolved Tension

The search results make clear that both perspectives claim biblical support. Continuationists maintain that biblical instruction on spiritual gifts remains relevant today, with no scriptural reason to believe otherwise, placing the burden of proof on cessationists. Yet cessationists counter that charismatic gifts served a unique period to spread the gospel and provide divine communication before the New Testament's completion, with the gifts' function limited to the church's foundation and thus temporal in nature.

The honest answer is that this remains genuinely contested theological ground. Believers on both sides can agree to disagree while remembering Jesus's prayer for unity, recognizing that allowing non-foundational issues to cause division contradicts what matters to Christ. What both camps affirm is that if miracles do occur today, they must flow from genuine dependence on the Holy Spirit and serve the gospel's advancement—never becoming ends in themselves or sources of spiritual pride.

At AVC there is no unresolved tension. The Lord still moves Supernaturally through his people like he always has. The Holy Spirit is Alive... In us... and in the Church. If you're not praying for much don't expect much.

[Resources: Rev. Standfest, 1-7]

Acts 2:15-18

2:15–18 “These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet 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.’ ” Peter answered the accusation that they were all drunk (2:13) by saying it was much too early in the day for that. He then proceeded to tie the event the crowd had just witnessed to the words of the prophet Joel, quoting from Joel

2:28–32. Not everything mentioned in Joel 2:28–32 was occurring that particular morning. The last days include all the days between Christ's first and second comings; it is another way of saying “from now on.” Peter was reminding these Jewish listeners that from prophecies like this one recorded by Joel, I will pour out my Spirit on all people, they should recognize the event they had just witnessed

as the work of the Spirit. It would be to all kinds of people—Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor—not just to kings and priests.

The “prophesying” mentioned by Peter is likely not only prediction of the future but also declaration of the nature and will of God. The visions and the dreams were common means that God used to reveal himself to all people. The point was that the insight into these visions and dreams would be the product of the Spirit’s work.

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was released throughout the entire world—to men, women, slave owners, slaves, Jews, and Gentiles. Everyone can receive the Spirit. This was a revolutionary thought for first-century Jews. Pentecost was designed to be a clear indication—to Jew and Gentile alike—that the messianic age had arrived.

The Messiah had come!

2:19–20 “I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.’ ” Not everything mentioned in Joel 2:28–32 was happening that particular morning. This part of Joel’s prophecy probably refers to the future period surrounding the second coming of Christ, placing the period of the church age (between Christ’s ascension and his return) between verses 18 and 19 (see Revelation 6:12). These events bear more resemblance to the phenomena of the Tribulation period as spelled out by many other Old Testament prophets, as well as Jesus himself (see Matthew 24:14, 21, 29–30 and the judgments of Revelation 8, 9, and 16).

It is possible that Peter was quoting the entire prophecy from Joel—even some of the parts that are still future—in order to avoid being accused of improper use of Scripture (the crowd would certainly know the Joel passage) and to get all the way through Joel’s passage to its final sentence, quoted in the next verse.

2:21 “And anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ ” This is Peter’s punch line. This salvation is available to anyone. Any person who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. God’s special relationship with Israel will continue, but it has been broadened to include everyone who calls on the name of the Lord. God’s plans for Israel had their climax in Christ. Access to God—for all people—now comes through Jesus Christ. With these words Peter witnessed to the crowd, as Jesus had predicted (1:8).

It would be a while before these new believers understood that the “anyone” included Gentiles. God had to work in a special way to make Peter understand that the message was meant for the whole world, not just the Jews (see Acts 10).

ANYONE IS ELIGIBLE

Quoting the prophet Joel, Peter announced that “anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” According to this verse (quoted also in Romans 10:13), the issue in salvation isn’t who a person is or what he or she has done; the issue is simple trust and humility. Anyone who looks to the Lord for forgiveness will find it. That person will be saved. What a fantastic promise! Who in your life needs the saving touch of God? Ask the Father to work in their lives, to draw them to the Son (John 6:44), and to bring them to salvation.

2:22 “People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus of Nazareth

[Source: 8]

Acts 2:19-21

The Outpouring and What It Means Today

One of the most powerful moments in Scripture is the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the early church. The Apostle Peter stood and declared that this was the fulfillment of what God had promised through the prophet Joel.

Acts 2:17-21 (ESV)

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

The Last Days Have Already Begun

In verses 17–18, Peter quotes Joel and announces that “in the last days” God would pour out His Spirit on all people. This outpouring is remarkably inclusive — crossing every boundary of age, gender, and social status.

Sons and daughters will prophesy.

Young men will see visions.

Old men will dream dreams.

Male and female servants will receive the Spirit and prophesy.

This reveals that supernatural spiritual gifts and empowerment are available to every believer. The Holy Spirit empowers ordinary people to do the extraordinary works of God.

The “last days” encompass the entire period between Christ’s first and second comings—essentially “from now on.” When Peter quotes Joel’s prophecy about the Spirit being poured out on all flesh, he is not claiming that every detail in Joel’s vision is happening at that exact moment. Rather, the resurrection marked the beginning of Jesus’ messianic reign, and the giving of the Holy Spirit signaled the inauguration of His rule through the church.

Why Verses 19–21 Are So Important

Do you know why Acts 2:19-21 are included in this passage?

The Holy Spirit’s empowerment does not stop until Christ returns.

Right after the promise of the Spirit poured out on all flesh, the prophecy shifts into eschatology (end-times theology). It speaks of wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth below — blood, fire, vapor of smoke, the sun turning to darkness and the moon to blood — all preceding the great and magnificent day of the Lord.

This is not a random addition. It is intentional. The outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh has already

begun the final transfiguration, yet the gift of the Spirit in Acts 2 has done no more than initiate the apocalyptic conditions under which the fullness of redemption will be fully accomplished in the coming reign of God. In the meanwhile, there will be fleeting signs of the Spirit's presence and activity. Luke sees the outpouring of the Spirit as a further stage of eschatological fulfillment, which makes the time of the church an eschatological era. The pattern in Acts shows this: the Spirit falls at Pentecost, then again on the Gentiles at Cornelius's house, then in Ephesus. These aren't separate events disconnected from Pentecost—they're manifestations of the same eschatological reality that began then and continues through the church age.

What This Means for Us Today

As believers, we are all called to be witnesses of the risen King. Yet many fall short of being effective witnesses. The reason is often simple: we fail to fully tap into the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, and at Pentecost the all-inclusive outpouring occurred. This promise is still for us. The gift of the Holy Spirit is for "you and your children and for all who are far off — everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

Until Jesus returns, we are invited to:

- Listen closely to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who still speaks and guides.
- Depend on His power rather than our own limited strength.
- Devote ourselves with intense effort and persistence to spreading the Gospel.

The signs, wonders, prophetic gifts, and empowerment described here are not relics of the past. They are part of how God advances His Kingdom until the very end.

And here is the glorious promise that concludes the prophecy:

"And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

This outpouring of the Holy Spirit is not just for dramatic moments in history — it is for everyday believers who desire to live powerful, effective, and fruitful lives for Jesus. The same Spirit who transformed the early church is ready to empower us today to be bold witnesses of the risen King.

[Sources: 9-10]

I Don't Speak in Tongues—Now What? Why Spiritual Gifts Still Matter Today

Sadly, Church history proves that there have been many divisions in the church over speaking in tongues. Some pastors and denominations say that speaking in tongues was only for the apostolic period and is no longer needed today. God bless those brothers and sisters, but they are flat out wrong. Apostle Paul addresses spiritual gifts, which includes the speaking of tongues, in 1 Corinthians 12 through 14. Not only that, he gives clear direction about how they are to be used because our God is not a God of chaos but of order.

The gift-ceasing theology is called Cessationism. It is my humble biblical opinion, based on the word of God, that this is a false teaching and harmful to the body of Christ. Think about this: If the gifts have ceased, then where do you draw the line? If it was just for the apostolic era, then does that also mean salvation was just for them? No, that's absolutely absurd. Pastors and theologians can cherry-pick a bunch of passages in the New Testament and make them sound very good to support their

argument. I am not being judgmental and I am not casting anyone to hell, but I think it is very bad hermeneutics to say the gifts have ceased.

My personal opinion is that the reason they came up with this theology is that they could not explain it if they laid their hands on someone and they did not get healed or experience some of the other supernatural gifts. “Oh no, what do we do?” Well, we explain it away. Look, every time you share the gospel with someone they do not always get saved, correct? It’s a God thing, not a you thing. It’s a Holy Spirit thing working in their heart to save someone’s soul. So if someone does not get healed when we lay our hands on them or pray for them supernaturally, that’s not our fault or our business—that’s the business of the living God. He chooses who, what, and how to heal.

We are called to do the stuff—to be the hands and feet of Jesus, to pray with power as the Lord prayed: “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Isn’t that the Lord’s Prayer—breaking off a piece of heaven and bringing it to earth? But at the end of the day, we don’t get to choose when that happens or when it doesn’t. We are not God. On the flipside, if you deny God’s power, you’re not going to see much of it. Jesus said He could do very few miracles in His hometown because of their lack of belief or lack of faith. (Mt. 13:58, Mark 6:56)

Let’s not throw all of the gifts out because of the whole theology (if you would call it that) about speaking in tongues. God is a supernatural miracle worker. He is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore.

On Tongues and the Holy Spirit

Speaking in tongues is not a requirement for receiving the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit does indeed work progressively in believers’ lives.

There is no set pattern for the reception of the Spirit in Acts—sometimes people received the Spirit at baptism, sometimes after baptism, and sometimes before baptism. More importantly, instances of tongues-speaking in Acts are erratic, not the general rule. Throughout Acts, thousands of people believe in Jesus with nothing said about them speaking in tongues, and nowhere in the New Testament is it taught that speaking in tongues is the only evidence that a person has received the Holy Spirit. Every believer in Christ has the Holy Spirit, but not every believer speaks in tongues.

When tongues did occur in Acts, they served a specific communicative purpose—the apostles were enabled to speak in other languages so they could share the truth with people in their own languages—rather than being a universal sign of Spirit-reception.

On the Spirit’s Progressive Work in Believers

God put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. This deposit language suggests an initial gift with future fullness. More directly, the human response gives rise to new divine initiatives—those who are touched by the Spirit can be touched again, and we can prepare ourselves to receive the Spirit not just at initiation into the Christian community but throughout our lives, for the Spirit is given again and again to those who cry out and pray for deliverance and forgiveness. As you draw closer to God through prayer, worship, and obedience, the Spirit’s transformative work intensifies within you.

[Sources: 11-15]

Mark 16:15-18

JESUS GIVES THE GREAT COMMISSION / 16:15–18

This paragraph represents a change of scene. This was another post-Resurrection appearance, the last to the remaining eleven disciples and other followers. This paragraph outlines Jesus' final charge to his followers (see also Matthew 28:16–20). The Gospel of Mark is a record of the gospel (or Good News) from its beginning (1:1). As the book closes, the gospel does not end, but continues in the lives of Jesus' followers. Jesus' command is to go everywhere and preach the Good News.

16:15 This is the Great Commission. The disciples had been trained well, and they had seen the risen Lord. God had given Jesus authority over heaven and earth. On the basis of that authority, Jesus told his disciples to make more disciples as they preached, baptized, and taught. With this same authority, Jesus still commands us to tell everyone everywhere the Good News.

16:16 The disciples were commanded to baptize people because baptism unites a believer with Jesus Christ in his or her death to sin and resurrection to new life. It is not the water of baptism that saves, but God's grace accepted through faith in Christ. Because of Jesus' response to the criminal on the cross who died with him, we know it is possible to be saved without being baptized (Luke 23:43). Jesus did not say that those who were not baptized would be condemned, but that anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. Baptism symbolizes submission to Christ, a willingness to live God's way, and identification with God's covenant people.

16:17–18 As the disciples fulfilled their commission, and indeed as others believed and went on to spread the gospel, miraculous signs would accompany them. As with Jesus' miracles, these signs would authenticate the source of their power and draw people to belief. At times, God would miraculously intervene on behalf of his followers. While some people have misinterpreted the notion of "picking up snakes" as thinking that one's faith is demonstrated by handling rattlesnakes, the writer seems to have in mind incidents like the one described in

Acts 28:1–6, where Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake without being harmed. The same could happen for someone who accidentally drank deadly poison. This does not mean, however, that we should test God by putting ourselves in dangerous situations.

[Source:16]

Acts 2:42-47

The Devoted Life of the Newborn Church

This first report of the newborn church gives us a beautiful snapshot of early church worship and community life in the first decade after Pentecost. After the dramatic events of that day—the rushing wind, tongues of fire, and the conversion of three thousand new believers—these followers joined with the original 120 and devoted themselves to a set of core practices that would shape the church for centuries.

"They devoted themselves" (Acts 2:42) is a powerful phrase. The Greek word is *proskartereō*, which conveys holding fast, enduring, and persevering. More specifically, it means "to continue to do something with intense effort, with the possible implication of despite difficulty." It emphasizes persistent and submissive perseverance and tenacity of a self-enclosed group collectively oriented

toward specific goals. The early believers weren't casually dabbling in apostolic teaching, fellowship, communion, and prayer; they were steadfastly anchoring themselves to these practices. They were regularly, continually persisting in the activities that follow.

Today, "devoted" still carries this same weight of wholehearted, ongoing commitment. In a distracted, consumer-driven culture, being devoted means more than showing up when convenient. It challenges the modern tendency toward spiritual consumerism—sampling teachings, attending services sporadically, or praying only in crisis. Instead, *proskartereō* calls for disciplined, intentional commitment to the foundational practices that shaped the early church. It reflects realism about the Christian life: commitment and discipline, especially when it comes to habits that sustain faith through seasons of difficulty, persecution, opposition, or discouragement. Yet the word also brings encouragement—our perseverance does not depend entirely on our own efforts. Christ has promised to keep us, raise us on the last day, and ensure that no one can pluck us from His hand or the Father's.

The Foundation of Their Christian Life (v. 42)

The early believers devoted themselves to four key things:

- The apostles' teaching: This was central. The apostles were eyewitnesses of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The Holy Spirit reminded them of Jesus' words, giving the church authoritative truth that would become the New Testament. From the very beginning, the church was committed to hearing, studying, and living out what the apostles taught. We are blessed today to sit under this same teaching preserved in Scripture. Pastors and believers should remain "unoriginal" in the best sense—faithfully passing on the apostles' doctrine rather than inventing new ones.
- Fellowship (*koinonia*): More than social gatherings or religious meetings, this was deep association, communion, and participation. They shared lives, goods, meals, struggles, victories, and a common love for God. The Christian life is meant to be shared—same Lord, same guide, same mission, same joys and battles.
- The breaking of bread: This refers to the Lord's Supper (communion), celebrated in remembrance of Jesus' death, patterned after the Last Supper. It likely included regular shared meals. Even though they lived close to the time of the crucifixion, they never wanted to forget what Jesus did on the cross. How much more should we remember?
- Prayers: Prayer was a consistent mark of their gatherings. The definite article in the Greek ("the prayers") suggests formal, corporate worship where they praised God together. Whenever God's work is done, God's people pray.

Everything powerful and glorious in the early church flowed from this solid foundation: the Word, fellowship, remembrance of the cross, and prayer.

The Presence and Power of God (v. 43)

A sense of awe (*phobos*/fear) came upon every soul. This reverent honor of the Lord was one of God's greatest works—changing human hearts. Many signs and wonders were performed through the apostles. These miracles (wonders that evoked awe and signs that authenticated the message) confirmed that the apostles' teaching was from God.

Their Close Hearts and Generous Sharing (vv. 44-45)

All who believed were together and had all things in common. With thousands of new believers (many visitors who had come for Pentecost and stayed to learn), practical needs arose. Believers voluntarily sold possessions and goods, distributing to anyone as they had need. This was not a permanent economic system or experiment in communism, but a voluntary, Spirit-led response to a specific situation marked by hospitality and love. Jesus had become far more important to them than their possessions.

The Christian Family Lived, Worshiped, and Grew (vv. 46-47)

Day after day they continued with one accord in the temple (large group gatherings for teaching and worship) and broke bread house to house (smaller, intimate fellowship, meals, and communion). They praised God with joy. Their lives were daily, joyful, and simple—good examples for every generation. They enjoyed the favor of all the people, even as friction grew with unbelieving Jews. While they continued participating in temple and synagogue life at first (seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament), they also met in homes for distinct Christian fellowship. This joyful, devoted, miracle-working, generous, Bible-studying, God-praising community produced two clear results:

1. The watching world was favorably impressed.
2. The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Note that the credit for growth belongs to the Lord Himself. When the church lives this way—devoted to the right things—God takes care of the growth.

This passage remains a powerful model for the modern church. Books, seminars, and strategies on church growth abound, but the early church's example is simple and profound. A church devoted to apostolic truth, deep fellowship, remembrance of Christ, and prayer will experience God's presence, power, generosity, joy, and supernatural growth.

[Sources: 17- 21]

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Sermon Notes:

Good Morning and Happy Sunday to Everyone...

Welcome to those Joining us Online...

It was Great to have a Week off- my first week away from the office since last August...

As many of you know my son Zeke & Daughter in Law Tiffany had Twins 4 Weeks ago... They were born premature and spent a whole month in the NICU- Praise God they are both Home... Thank you for Praying...

[Let's Pray]

Today we are going to Conclude the Series- Witnesses of the Risen King (Online)

Speaking of Online... Here are the AVC Connections: YouTube, App, Facebook/Website

As Christians I believe we all have Being Witnesses of Jesus in Common...

Unfortunately, many Christians fall short of being Good Witnesses...

My Question is... Why is that? Why may we be Poor Witnesses (Perse')

My theory is... Most Christians don't tap into the Power of the Holy Spirit...

Jesus is the One that Promised he would Send the Holy Spirit... And Guess what... He did...

At Pentecost an ALL Inclusive Outpouring Occurred... I want to Read it again...

Let's Read Acts 2: 17-21

Do you know why Verses 19-21 are so important & included

The Holy Spirit Empowerment doesn't stop until Christ Returns

Have you Read the Great Commission in Mark 16:15-18? Let's Read it... You might be a little Shocked...

Read Mark 16:15-18

•Why Signs? Why Healing? Why Demons Cast out? Because that's what Jesus did, The Apostles & Christians throughout the Bible- often leads to Salvation
I often Hear Christians say to me... I Don't know what to Say to my Co-Worker OR Family or Friend...

Listen Carefully... SAY & DO what the Holy Spirit Whispers to you... (2x)

I understand... the Holy Spirit Speaking or Leading you may sound Weird or Foreign... However there are multiple Biblical Passages that mention the Holy Spirit Speaking & Guiding- Let's Look

Holy Spirit Speaking & Guiding (Short List)

- Holy Spirit "Told Philip" (Acts 8:29)
- "Spirit said to Peter" (Acts 10:19-20)
- Spirit told Peter, "To go without doubting" (Acts 11: 12)
- "The Holy Spirit said to the Church in Antioch" (Acts 13:1-3)
- "Holy Spirit said don't preach in the Province of Asia" (Acts 16:6-7)
- Be "led by the Spirit" (Romans 8:14)
- "Walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16-18 & 25)

You know what's Drowning out the Voice of the Holy Spirit... The Noise, Distractions & Chaos we live in...

Last Week when I went off the Grid... In the Quiet I heard from the Spirit Clearer & Easier...

(Short Story)

- Holy Spirit said I am everywhere... Deer ran across the Creek, Rock & Pod of Fish, Eagles

What's the Golden Ticket to God the Holy Spirit?

Acts 2:38-39 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Christians we must be Empowered by the Holy Spirit if we want to Spread the Good News of Jesus...

To Wrap this all up in Conclusion- I want to share a Very Important Biblical Fact...

I call this Section in Acts 2:42-47- Devoting ourselves to Spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ

One Theologian says this about the Word Devoting: "Devoting means to do something with intense effort... to persist even in difficulty. Devoting goes beyond casual involvement." (Schneider & Bale 3:172)

Read Acts 2:42-47

If you Need Prayer

Closing Prayer

Devotional Questions:

- 1. Why do you think many Christians, including possibly yourself, fall short of being effective witnesses for Jesus?**
- 2. In what ways have you personally experienced or failed to tap into the power of the Holy Spirit in your daily Christian life?**
- 3. What does the promise of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 2:17-21 mean to you, especially knowing this empowerment continues until Christ returns?**
- 4. How do the signs, healings, and casting out of demons mentioned in Mark 16:15-18 challenge your understanding of what it means to fulfill the Great Commission?**
- 5. When was the last time you sensed the Holy Spirit speaking to you or guiding you in a specific way, similar to how He spoke to Philip, Peter, or the church in Antioch?**
- 6. What noise, distractions, or chaos in your current life might be drowning out the voice of the Holy Spirit?**
- 7. Reflect on a recent time when stepping away from busyness (like Pastor Brad's off-the-grid experience) helped you hear the Holy Spirit more clearly. What happened?**
- 8. According to Acts 2:38-39, the gift of the Holy Spirit is promised to all whom the Lord calls. How does this promise encourage you personally?**
- 9. What does "devoting ourselves" with intense effort and persistence (as described in Acts 2:42-47) look like in your life right now?**
- 10. As we conclude this series, how will you actively pursue being a better witness of the risen King by relying on the Holy Spirit's power going forward?**