

UNIT 30

+

EVERY DAY

THE LORD

ADDED TO

THEIR NUMBER

“With Miracles, Wonders, and Signs”

by Allyson M. Howell

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples were left with the promise that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and conquered sin will be given to them (Acts 1:8). What will happen when this power from the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples? Since this power is from God, its use will be beautiful and will bring salvation to many. And how will the power of the Holy Spirit work to bring salvation? Through the church. It is through the proclamation of the gospel by God’s people that the nations will hear the good news!

For many of us, this is a scary and almost unbelievable truth. “You mean God will use me? But I am so weak. I am so scared. I am worried about my reputation. I don’t know how to do it.” While your fears may feel overwhelming, the reality is that God’s power rests on you! And when God’s people obey His commands and proclaim the gospel, God brings about repentance, baptism, fellowship, miracles, praise, and boldness—all with the purpose of bringing the nations into His kingdom.

We see each of these gifts from God played out in the book of Acts as God gave the disciples power through the Holy Spirit—the same power we have today!

THROUGH REPENTANCE, BAPTISM, AND FELLOWSHIP

When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, existing followers of Jesus were filled and begin speaking in many different languages. When the crowd misunderstood why this was happening, the disciples did not get offended, but instead shared the whole gospel—that Jesus came to save the world from sin and death. And because God’s power through the Holy Spirit was at work, thousands of people repented from their sins, obeyed Jesus’s command to be baptized, and gathered with God’s people to share everything they had and to fellowship.

These seemingly ordinary acts were incredible displays of God’s power. Every time a person understands and believes the gospel and turns away from

a life of sin, it is an outworking of God's power. Every time someone decides to proclaim publicly their trust in Christ through baptism, that is an outworking of God's power. Every time we obey in gathering together to love, care for, and enjoy each other's presence, that too is an outworking of God's power. All these things are a result of the Holy Spirit working. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can joyfully obey God's commands, trusting that obedience is more valuable than our feelings and our fears. This obedience by the power of the Spirit is what brought thousands into the church after Jesus ascended to heaven, and it is what brings people to salvation today.

THROUGH MIRACLES THAT PRODUCE PRAISE

God not only displays His power through repentance, baptism, and fellowship with the church, but also through miracles. Miracles are sometimes hard to understand. It is easy to swing on a pendulum of false teaching about them. On one end, there are those who believe miracles are not real, so they dismiss anything supernatural or unexplainable. On the other end, there are those who believe miracles are so essential to

salvation that they make up fake spiritual gestures or mix them with evils such as witchcraft and divination.

But what we know from Scripture and the book of Acts is that miracles exist for the purpose of repentance from sin and for praising God. Any time a miracle occurs, it is an opportunity for believers to say: "Look at what God did! He is worthy of all of our praise!" For when God's power is on display, the response should not be to shrug it off. Instead, as it was for all who were at the temple when a man who was lame began to walk, God's power in miracles should bring about repentance and praise. Miracles are one way that God chooses to draw many to Himself and lead them to the salvation they need.

THROUGH BOLDNESS DESPITE OPPOSITION

Our proclamation of the gospel might not always look like thousands repenting and miracles abounding as in Acts. Sometimes proclaiming the gospel brings about persecution. While most Americans are unfamiliar with the life-threatening persecution going on in many parts of the world, every Christian who has shared the gospel is familiar with opposition.

Any time a miracle occurs, it is an opportunity for believers to say, "Look at what God did!"

When God's power is at work, even the fiercest opposition cannot destroy or thwart the gospel going forward.

Despite imprisonment, Peter and John in Acts 4 stood boldly before the Jewish leadership and proclaimed the truth about Jesus. When they were released, they shared with the church about what happened to them, and the church did not waiver.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can joyfully obey God's commands, trusting that obedience is more valuable than our feelings and our fears.

When God's power is at work, even the fiercest opposition cannot destroy or thwart the gospel going forward. There is a well-known quote by Tertullian, a member of the early church, saying, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."¹ What this implies is

that persecution often has a reverse effect. Instead of silencing Christians or causing them to fear, their faithfulness and boldness in the face of opposition actually serves to strengthen the church and send the gospel out even further.

There is nothing that can come against the power of God and still stand. It is the call of every believer to grip firmly to God's power and declare the gospel so that many would be added to the church every day.



THE CHURCH GROWS



+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

Both the bold preaching of Peter and the large number of people who trusted in Christ reveal the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Acts 2

+ **SETTING:**

The Holy Spirit came to the first followers of Jesus. They then had the power they needed to take the gospel to the nations (Acts 1:8). This work started with Peter, who boldly and clearly proclaimed the good news about Jesus to the people who had gathered for the Pentecost celebration. God's power through the Holy Spirit was on display, both in the message Peter proclaimed and in the response of those who believed.

DAY 1

READ:

Acts 2:22-33

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 2:25-26

NOTES

What makes your heart glad and your tongue rejoice? If we are honest, far too often we spend time thinking about things that make our hearts sad and our lips speak words of discouragement. There's no denying that this world is a difficult place—filled with sadness and despair. So if we are going to have hearts filled with gladness and tongues that rejoice, we need something beyond our circumstances to shape us.

At Pentecost, Peter speaks to the crowd, quoting Psalm 16:8-11 in Acts 2:26, where David saw the Lord sitting at the right hand of the Father, and this exalted picture of Christ brought him joy. David's life wasn't great at the moment when he wrote the psalm. There were perhaps many causes for fear and sadness for David, but he was able to look through his circumstances to see the risen Christ, ruling and reigning over all things, and this made him glad.

Peter wanted the crowds to know that Jesus was the same Lord of the Scriptures of their forefathers. He wanted them to know that the resurrected Christ is our all, our Lord and Savior, the only path to life. By training our hearts and minds to focus on Him, we can reorient our affections to hope, gladness, and joy even in difficult times.

Where do you look for gladness and joy?

DAY 2

READ:

Acts 2:22-36

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 2:28-36

NOTES

Imagine that you are lost in the woods, trying to make your way back to camp for the night. The evening sky is growing dark, and you've never been in this place before. You've lost your hiking partners, and you begin to feel looming desperation well up in your soul. How will you find your way out? Suddenly a random stranger stumbles into your path. It's obvious that she's a competent hiker who has traveled this route before. She stops, asks where you are going, and then invites you to follow her. She knows the path to life. All you have to do is follow in her steps.

The same pattern is true for us as well. God reveals the path of life to us. We often feel lost, trapped, isolated, in the dark—lost in the woods of our lives and seeing no clear way out. The Lord Jesus Christ invites us to follow Him on the path to life. He's given us His Word, which provides a map to safety. We are not alone in the darkness; rather, He is with us in His Word and His Spirit to guide us to safety. Sadly, too often we are tempted to try to find the path to life on our own. We may know the path He provides, but rather than depending on His wisdom, we trust in our own and get further lost in the darkness.

How do you need to follow God's path to life today?

DAY 3

READ:

Acts 2:36-41

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 2:38

NOTES

The Holy Spirit is a gift given to all Christians. God isn't like our great-aunt at Christmas, who simply wants to be kind but doesn't really know what we like. Instead, God is a perfect gift-giver. First, He has access to everything, so He can give any gift He wants. He's not limited by resources or access. He's also perfectly aware of our needs. He knows us even better than we know ourselves, so He's able to give the gift that He knows we need the most.

With all resources and perfect knowledge, God chooses to give Christians Himself. He knows that He is what we need the most. The Holy Spirit indwells believers. He is with us, our great Guide and Comforter in this life. He goes with us at all times and in all circumstances. While God continues to give spiritual gifts that empower us to serve the church and build up the body, the most important gift that God gives is Himself. Christians should treasure this gift. We should give thanks to God for the immeasurable kindness, not only of sending Jesus to pay the price for our sins, but also in sending the Holy Spirit to be with us for the rest of our lives.

How does the Holy Spirit shape your life?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"We don't have to wait for the Holy Spirit to come, for he did come on the Day of Pentecost, and he has never left the church."¹

—John Stott (1921–2011)

DAY 4

READ:

Acts 2:36-41

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 2:41

NOTES

Have you been baptized? If so, what do you remember about that day? Baptism is a celebration for the new Christian. It marks the time of the outward proclamation of a person's spiritual rebirth.

Here in Acts 2, those who repented of their sin and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ were baptized, and this pattern continued throughout the New Testament. All those who place their faith in Jesus, and only those who have faith in Jesus, are baptized.

In many ways, the act of baptism is the starting point for Christian obedience. It's the first command after the call to repent and believe. Baptism is also an act that Jesus Himself submitted to. While He did not have sin to repent of, He modeled the life of righteousness that would be expected of His people. Those who are baptized are united in this glorious picture of His death, burial, and resurrection, and we follow His model for Christian obedience.

If you haven't been baptized, why not? And if you have, how does your baptism continue to encourage you?

DAY 5

READ:

Acts 2:42-47

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 2:42

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #79: BODY OF CHRIST

The New Testament describes the church as the body of Christ. The church lives and operates as Christ's representative here on earth, with Christ as its head (Colossians 1:18). This means that the church is an extension of Christ's ministry, carrying out His work by fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). In addition, the picture of the church as the body of Christ shows us the interconnectedness of individual Christians, with each member dependent upon one another for growth and sanctification (1 Corinthians 12).

The first Christians did not merely engage in the various practices we see mentioned in verse 42; rather, they were devoted to them. The word “devoted” communicates steadfastness, commitment, and perseverance. Those who are learning to play a sport or an instrument model this virtue. You can't learn a skill or difficult sport if you merely do it from time to time. You have to be devoted to learning the scales in order to master an instrument. Hours spent throwing, catching, and batting are required fundamentals when it comes to becoming a skilled baseball player.

In the same way, devotion is required for Christian community. While we might have casual friends who are Christians, we need devotion to actually invest in these relationships in a self-giving, sacrificial way. We need devotion to submit to the Word of God as it is taught and to talk to God in prayer. We devote ourselves to the work when we commit to these practices day in and day out, even when we don't feel like it. God pledges to bless our faithful devotion as we give ourselves to Jesus Christ and His church.

What things in your life are you devoted to that would be pleasing to God and that wouldn't be pleasing to Him?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"Christ's death was a stumbling block to the Jews. The apostles responded to this issue by presenting it as a victory that had been planned by God. It was not the unfortunate defeat of a good man who had no power to save himself from such a death."²

—Ajith Fernando

POINT 1: God's people are empowered to proclaim Jesus boldly (Acts 2:22-31).

Peter's focus was that the death and resurrection of Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promised plan to save sinners and redeem the world.

? **What do we learn about what is needed to share the good news of Jesus through Peter's sermon?**

Peter, knowing his audience, spoke of David to point to Jesus as the true King who conquered death.

? **Why is it important to know our audience to better spread the message of the gospel?**

POINT 2: God's people are empowered to call others to repentance (Acts 2:37-41).

Those whose hearts are pierced by the gospel message repent and are baptized in Jesus's name.

? **Why do you think Peter combines repentance and baptism as a response to the gospel?**

The promise of the Spirit is for everyone who chooses to believe, until Jesus returns. And through the work of the Spirit, God's kingdom will grow.

? **From Day 3: How does the Holy Spirit shape your life?**

POINT 3: God's people are empowered to live together as one (Acts 2:42-47).

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representative here on earth, with Christ as its head (Colossians 1:18). This means that the church is an extension of Christ’s ministry, carrying out His work by fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). In addition, the picture of the church as the body of Christ shows us the interconnectedness of individual Christians, with each member dependent upon one another for growth and sanctification (1 Corinthians 12).

? **How can you be a part of building up the body in your church?**

Devotion, joy, and sincerity are the fruit of believers as they strive to be one body and grow with the Lord’s power.

? **With what attitudes do you perform Christian activity or service?**

MY RESPONSE

Because we are a new creation in Christ, we seek to live according to our new identity as we put our old selves to death day by day.

- **HEAD:** Where are you being asked to repent and believe today?
- **HEART:** How is your heart pierced as you think about what Jesus has done for you?
- **HANDS:** How can your engagement with the local church lead to kingdom growth?



Scan this QR code to access this session’s Scripture passages.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“They made the grace of God credible by a society of love and mutual care which astonished the pagans and was recognized as something entirely new. It lent persuasiveness to their claim that the New Age had dawned in Christ.”³

–Michael Green (1930–2019)