

## Mighty Powerful

### Acts 1:8

I want to begin this morning with a confession. The confession is to admit that although this is a very familiar passage packed with truth, it was a very difficult message to prepare. I studied and had pages of notes, but trying to put them together was for some reason challenging. I wanted to begin by telling you about parades and how much people enjoy them, but how most of us don't know about all the months and months of planning and preparation that go into every detail. I wanted to share with you the song "I Love a Parade."

I love a parade, the tramping of feet,  
I love every beat I hear of a drum.  
I love a parade, when I hear a band  
I just want to stand and cheer as they come.  
That rat-a tat-tat, the blare of a horn.  
That rat-a tat-tat, a bright uniform;  
The sight of a drill will give me a thrill,  
I thrill at the skill of everything military.  
I love a parade, a handful of vets,  
A line of cadets or any brigade,  
For I love a parade.

I wanted to tell you about the many occasions throughout the year when the streets of America are lined with revilers watching the march of bands, the twirling of batons, tractors pulling festively decorated floats and the clowns tossing candy.

I wanted to tell you about one of the best loved and most watched parades that happens on New Year's Day when the Tournament of Roses parade takes place. I wanted to tell you about one particular year when one of the beautiful floats sputtered and quit right in the middle of the parade route bringing all the rest of the parade behind it to a grinding halt. I wanted to tell you that they discovered the float had run out of gas. The humorous, ironic, and embarrassing thing about this float running out of gas was that the float was sponsored by the Chevron

oil company. The owners of the float had done everything well in preparing their float except they neglected to avail themselves of the vast resources of gas at their disposal. Without it the float had no power to do what it was supposed to do.

Turn with me to our passage for today in **Acts 1:8**. It's in this passage that I wanted to call your attention to three things about power.

The promise of this transforming power

The person behind this transforming power

The purpose for this transforming power

Then I wanted to ask if there was someone who would bravely stand and quote the verse for us.

**"But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (KJV)**

**"But you are to be given power when the Holy Spirit has come to you. You will be witnesses to me, not only in Jerusalem, not only throughout Judea, not only in Samaria, but to the very ends of the earth!" (Phillip's Translation)**

I wanted to talk about the promise of transforming power that is in this verse.

## I. THE PROMISE OF THIS TRANSFORMING POWER

I thought about sharing with you what happens when I drop David off at school or when Robyn and I go out for an evening leaving David with a babysitter. It probably doesn't surprise you that I give him last minute instructions, expectations and encouragement. If it's at school, we always pause before he gets out of the car so I can pray with him. Then he heads down the sidewalk and into the school. I want him to know that I'll be thinking about him during the day and that I can't wait to see him later on. I encourage him to do his very best in

school and be obedient to his teachers.

As I thought about this passage I wanted you to realize that Jesus has done much the same thing with his disciples here. They don't know it, but He is now just moments away from leaving them. It was at this time that He gave them some last minute words of instruction and encouragement. They were told to go to Jerusalem and wait for the promise the Father had prepared to give to them.

**Now you might ask why were they to go to Jerusalem?** I honestly don't think it was the place that was important so much as the act of obedience. Jesus went on to tell them that they would be baptized, immersed with the Holy Spirit not many days from then.

But the disciples were still curious about one thing. It's noted in **verse 6 – “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”**

They were still focusing on an earthly kingdom, a kingdom that would overthrow the subjugation of the Roman Empire that had oppressed Israel for many years. **Is now the time?**

Jesus reminded them that it wasn't in their best interest to know what only the Father knows. Instead of knowing times and dates they needed to know and do something far more important, the fulfillment of a promise was about to be kept.

I wanted you to know that a promise is an agreement to do something made by someone to someone else. The promise is that they would receive power. This power would not be to organize a political overthrow of the current government. It was not power for self-rule like the other nations around them. It was not even power to leap tall buildings in a single bound. This was to be a different kind of power.

Last week we briefly looked at another kind of

power. It was the word authority. That the disciples would receive power did not mean they would be given authority to help overthrow Rome, much as they wanted and hoped for when they asked Jesus the question that was burning on their minds. The word power here is our word for dynamite. We think of dynamite as that powerful explosive that is made by soaking nitroglycerin into some absorbent material such as ammonium nitrate and wood pulp. To the Greek it meant inherent ability, capability to perform anything. They would be able to do a task given to them by Jesus. That's what I wanted to try and convey to you today. I wanted you to know that same power is ours today as well.

This would not be just any power nor is it given to just every person. They would need this power because they did not in themselves have the ability to do what Jesus was going to tell them. We need this same power to do the same task given to them.

**I needed a certain kind of power last week and I didn't get it. I got in my car and turned the key expecting the engine to be brought to life and it didn't happen. No lights, no fans to blow heat, no heated seat on a sub-zero morning, no power. I put the battery charger on for the night and the next morning I had power to the car. I had the battery tested and they said it only had a 30% charge. I took it to an auto repair shop where they ran some additional tests. It was my battery after all. After a new battery was installed I can now confidently turn on the power to the car and it starts.**

Much of what we do around the house or garage or at work requires power of some kind. **I put in a new countertop for Robyn in the basement where she does her canning. I needed to cut a hole where the sink went and I have some power tools to do that. It doesn't matter how new my saw is or how sharp the blade might be in the saw, if it's not connected to a power source it won't operate. But once I connect**

it to the outlet and press the on button, keep all fingers and toes back.

Jesus gave the disciples a promise that holds for us as well. It was a promise that came from the Father. **“You will receive power.”** It would happen sometime in the very near future and I wanted you to know that when God makes a promise it’s as good as done. The writer of Hebrews states that **“He who promised is faithful” (10:23)**. It would happen just the way He said and would not fall short of all He intended to give them.

I wanted you to know that we can trust God and have every confidence that when He says He is going to do something He will keep the promises that He has made. He keeps them because first He is God and He does not lie and second because He is God, He has the power to do it, **“nothing is impossible with God.”**

I may make a promise that I can’t keep.  
I may make a promise that I might forget about, but not God. The promise was made that they would receive power.

So if Jesus was telling them they would receive power, they would receive all the ability they would need to do what He was asking them to do. That promise holds for us as well. The promise was not just for the time of the apostles or just the apostles themselves. That power was for them and for us and is available in incalculable measure until Jesus returns. I wanted you to know that when God gives us an assignment He gives us the power to do it. We don’t have to do it in our own power.

Understand that this power is only available for those who are in Christ and it is available all the time and in great measure. This power will transform you.

I thought about sharing with you the contrast in the disciples before Jesus’ death and after Jesus’

resurrection and ascension. At the time Jesus was arrested **Mark 14:50** says **“Then everyone deserted Him and fled.”**

Two months later we see an entirely different group of disciples. After His ascension notice the difference in these men. **Acts 4:31** **“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”** That’s the power they were promised.

Before they had merely been with Christ, now they were in Christ and they had power to unashamedly proclaim Christ.

Before Christ Peter spoke brashly, but being in Christ he spoke boldly.

Before Christ Thomas doubted, but being in Christ he demonstrated courage.

Somehow I wanted to convey the promise of transforming power.

**“You will receive power.”** What a promise, but where would this power come from and when would it happen?

But there is more that I wanted to tell you about from this passage. I wanted to tell you about the person behind this transforming power.

## II. THE PERSON BEHIND THIS TRANSFORMING POWER

**“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.”**

The power Jesus was talking about would come from the Holy Spirit when He came upon them. That is why they were to go to Jerusalem and what they were to wait for.

As I pondered the message I wanted you to know that the tense in the Greek is what is called the genitive absolute, meaning that it was certain to happen just as Jesus said that when the Spirit came

on them they would receive power. It would happen because the one who promised is faithful.

I wanted to figure out a way to convey to you that as part of the trinity, the Holy Spirit has the right, the authority and the ability to give us this power. It doesn't come from anywhere else.

He is not just a power or an influence. **If I am out in a sailboat, the power of the wind influences how fast I can go or where I might be able to go.** The Holy Spirit is a person distinct from God the Father and God the Son. As a person He has a will (I Corinthians 12:11), He grieves (Ephesians 4:30), He loves (Romans 15:30), He searches the deep truths of God and reveals them to us (I Corinthians 2:9-10), He speaks (Revelation 2:7; Galatians 4:6; John 15:26), He intercedes (Romans 8:26), He teaches (John 14:26), He leads and guides (Romans 8:14), and He calls and commissions (Acts 13:2; 20:28)

The Holy Spirit is God and as God He has the same attributes – He is eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, holy, just, and infinite. He is a person.

As I thought about the message I wanted you to know that at Pentecost just 10 days from this meeting between Jesus and His disciples, the Holy Spirit would come upon them and empower them. He was the Comforter that Jesus said would come and He would inhabit the Church, the people of God. All the work that the church does for the kingdom of God is in the power of the Holy Spirit. You need to know that when we as a church act to do what He has called us to do we do so in His power.

I wanted you to know that when the Holy Spirit comes in power to give you power

He regenerates the believer making him into a new creation (John 3:3-6; 6:63; Titus 3:5), He baptizes us into the body of Christ at salvation (John 1:32-34; I Corinthians 12:12-13), He indwells all believers (I Corinthians 3:16; Romans 8:9),

To seal them till the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30)

To give believers assurance of salvation (Romans 8:14-16; II Corinthians 1:12, 22)

To strengthen believers in godly living (Ephesians 3:16-19)

He fills the believer (Ephesians 5:18-20), He liberates the believer from sin (Romans 8:1-2), He directs the believer to understand we are God's children (Romans 8:14-17), He equips the believer illuminating and instructing him with the truth (I Corinthians 2:12-14; John 16:13-14),

Empowering him to speak for Christ (I Thessalonians 1:5; I Corinthians 2:1-5)

The power of the Holy Spirit is available to all who are in Christ in full measure. If I am filled with the Spirit and you are filled with the Spirit, His power does not diminish in any way even when many people are filled with the Spirit. **It is not like the wiring in my shop when I go to turn on my saw and the lights dim because there is a power drain.** The limitless power of the Holy Spirit is the same for every believer. The key to experiencing His power in us is in how much we are willing to yield to His power.

I wanted you to know who the Holy Spirit is and what He does when He indwells us at salvation. He is the source of this power that Jesus was promising from God. It doesn't come by going to the gym and lifting weights. It doesn't come from drinking protein shakes. It doesn't come from someone else giving us power. It only comes from the indwelling Spirit and the disciples would receive it when they obediently went to Jerusalem to wait for the promise to be fulfilled.

All too often we're trying to live the Christian life and do the things God wants us to do in our own strength. **“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord.” (Zechariah 4:6)**

When Peter told the Lord he would never abandon Him but always follow Him, it was really in his own strength and it's evident when Peter denied the Lord those three times during the trial of Jesus. Later on we see the evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit when standing before the religious leaders on account of preaching about Christ he boldly told them that they couldn't help but speak about Him.

Jesus told the disciples that the Spirit would be the One who **“lives with you and will be in you” (John 14:17)**. As a result they would experience His power.

Without the Holy Spirit or without availing ourselves of the power of the Holy Spirit, we don't have the power, the ability to do what we have been called to do.

I somehow wanted to convey this truth to you from our passage about the person behind this transforming power.

But this passage also tells me one more thing I wanted to tell you about. I wanted you to know about the purpose for this transforming power.

### III. THE PURPOSE FOR THIS TRANSFORMING POWER

**What good is power if it's not used, if we don't avail ourselves of it?** The float in the Rose Bowl parade had all the resources of Chevron Oil at its disposal but it wouldn't move another inch without getting gas for the motor to run. They could get out and push the float, they could tow the float, but what it really needed was gasoline.

As I thought about the message, I wanted you to know that the purpose of the Holy Spirit's power in us as explained in our passage is to be witnesses for Christ. This power would be for a global witness.

**“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.”**

We see this modeled for us in Acts when the witness began in Jerusalem and thousands were saved after hearing the gospel. In chapter 8 after the stoning of Stephen we find that the gospel witness was carried into other parts of Judea and into Samaria because persecution dispersed the believers into those regions. Then in chapter 9 there is the conversion of Saul. In chapter 10 Peter took the gospel witness to the Gentile home of Cornelius and then in the rest of Acts we see the gospel's witness expand throughout Asia Minor and on to Rome. Rome was considered to be the center of the civilized world.

I wanted you to know that with the same empowering Spirit in us, we are to do no less. We too are called to be the same witnesses of the good news of Christ who died and rose again to bring all who call on Him to salvation. John spoke about that in his first epistle when he wrote **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.” (I John 1:1-2)**

I wanted you to know that we aren't called to talk about the return of Jesus; we are called to talk about the redemption of Jesus. ***I wanted to tell you that only in the power of the Holy Spirit can ordinary men do extraordinary things.*** What they were

called to do was not natural, it was supernatural. If today you have the gift of evangelism and can easily talk to others about Christ you need to remember that this is not your ability, but God's ability in you given by the Spirit. But while some have the spiritual gift of evangelism, we all have the same power of the Holy Spirit in us to be witnesses because we are all called to witness.

I wanted you to know from this passage that our witness begins at home, wherever we might call our Jerusalem and then that witness is to expand out with a reach that is further and further. **Dr. Oswald Smith says that "the light that shines the farthest will shine the brightest at home."**

One author notes that Titus 2 tells us that how we live our lives lays a foundation of integrity and believability on which the effectiveness of personal witness is built. The Holy Spirit not only gives the power to witness, but the power to be a good witness when we live under His control. I wanted in some way to convey to you that the power of the Holy Spirit is essential in carrying out the will and work of Christ – to get the gospel out to a world that is wallowing in the mire of despair and hopelessness. While knowing multiple methods of witnessing is helpful, they are no match when the power of the Holy Spirit unleashed in the believer who will take up the mantle of confessing Christ to others.

The power to be witnesses for Christ comes in sufficient measure by the indwelling Spirit and when we pray earnestly we will boldly speak about Christ. Real witnessing occurs when we surrender to the Lordship of Christ. When that occurs our lives will become an appealing example to unbelievers of the transforming supernatural power that is in us only through the work of the Holy Spirit.

**I wanted to tell you what Robert Coleman said in his book *The Master Plan of Evangelism* that**

**witnessing is "altogether the Spirit's work. All the disciples were asked to do was to let the Spirit have complete charge of their lives... They were to be human instruments announcing the good tidings, and the Holy Spirit was to be God's personal empowerment for their mission."**

**He goes on to explain that "evangelism is not an optional accessory to our life. It is the heartbeat of all that we are called to be and do. It is the commission of the church which gives meaning to all else that is undertaken in the name of Christ."**

Witnessing is not a Christian life elective, it is mandatory.

**Why do the lost matter to God?** They matter because they were created in His image. They matter because He loves them. They matter because His Son died for them. They matter because He has hope and a home for them if they repent, believe and receive Christ.

Somehow in this message I wanted to tell you that a witness talks about what he knows. A witness shares what he has experienced. A witness is faithful to the end. A witness of the gospel cooperates with the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Billy Graham once exclaimed that "God will hold us responsible as a generation for how well we fulfilled His commission."**

Jesus said that **"repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."** (Luke 24:47)

**At some point in the message I wanted to share with you about Arthur Pierson who was a Presbyterian Minister that started the Student Volunteer Movement in 1882. He wrote in the Missionary Review that three things were needed to finish the Great Commission and evangelize the world.**

1. The whole church needed to be involved.

2. Evangelistic zeal was needed in the lives of believers.
3. A baptism of power of the Holy Spirit was needed.

On the last point he wrote “to do this work in 20 years we must get more Gospel, more vitality... The church has money, brains, rivers of prayer and oceans of sermons, but she lacks power.”

That power, that evangelistic power, comes from the Holy Spirit.

Pastor John Piper writes that with His power there is deep conviction to witness. We will witness with certainty because, as Piper writes, the Holy Spirit “wraps us up as though in a garment of strength.”

In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul states “**our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.**” (I Thessalonians 1:5) When the Holy Spirit comes on you in power, you will be witnesses.

To the Corinthians he wrote “**My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.**” (I Corinthians 2:4-5)

Piper goes on to say that with the power of the Spirit there is self-denying courage and boldness to witness.

**II Timothy 1:7-8 “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord.”**

Piper then concludes that in the power of the Holy Spirit there is what he calls converting effectiveness.

Speaking of Barnabas, **Acts 11:24 “He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.”**

His conclusion to the matter and to this passage as we close this morning is this: “**Evangelism is a supernatural business or it is nothing of eternal significance.**”

This passage demands that we have a vision of God and a view of man. We must see the world as God does and have the same heart for the lost as He does. God provided a way for eternal life through His Son. He has left us here for the purpose of sharing the good news of Christ to the world. We need the power of the indwelling Spirit, because only through Him can we accomplish that task. **Are you satisfied with the spiritual level of power in your witness?** If not, you need only look so far as your willingness to let the Spirit unleash His power in you to be a witness to the world of God’s saving grace. We are clothed with Divine power to accomplish a divine task with a permanent indwelling and empowerment. Without His power, we become just like that float, powerless to do anything, ineffective at doing what we were called to do – be witnesses.

As I thought about this passage and the message I wanted to show you the faces of people who need the Lord. They were the faces of people from tribes in third world countries, the busy streets of Moscow, Paris, London and New York City. They were the faces of people at shopping malls and football stadiums and college campuses. They were the faces in office cubicles and assembly lines and hospital beds. They were the faces of world leaders like Vladimir Putin, Hugo Chavez, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Barack Obama. They were the faces of Casey Anthony acquitted for the murder of her 3 year old daughter and James Holmes responsible for the killings in the Colorado movie theater. As I thought about the message I wanted to urge you to compile a list of the unsaved and

commit to pray for and witness to them in the power  
of the Holy Spirit and to think about them in this  
song by Steve Green.

Every day they pass me by,  
I can see it in their eyes;  
Empty people filled with care,  
Headed who knows where.  
On they go through private pain,  
Living fear to fear.  
Laughter hides the silent cries,  
Only Jesus hears.

People need the Lord.  
People need the Lord.  
At the end of broken dreams,  
He's the open door.  
People need the Lord.  
People need the Lord.  
When will we realize  
People need the Lord.

That's what I wanted to tell you.