

# The Unwavering Church

Lives in the Spirit

September 21, 2025

Acts 2:1-13

## Introduction

Growing up in northwest rural Mississippi, I was no stranger to violent weather. The thunderstorms were (and still are) legit, and while I wouldn't equate the region with Oklahoma or other "flyover" states, we saw our fair share of tornadoes as well.

I distinctly remember a time as a young child in which we experienced a tornado. These were the days in which homeowners were advised to open up all of their home windows in an attempt to combat the extraordinarily low pressure of the storm. So as the storm came through, the inside of our home was pretty much a giant wind tunnel. While my dad was standing in the living room looking at a black and white radar image that looked [something like this](#), my mom and brother and I were underneath the large slate billiard table, presumably to protect us from a collapsing home (and what tornado could blow that thing around?).

Well, like any young child in the middle of the night, I had to go to the bathroom. The wind was blowing hard enough in the hall bath that my urine stream wasn't straight. It was a pretty terrifying moment. As it turns out, there are powers in life that we simply can't generate or control. We can't make the wind blow harder or stop a hurricane in its tracks. We can't hold back the fire when it rages. We can't stand in the middle of a tornado and pretend our strength will hold it off. There are forces in this world that remind us we are small, weak, and not in control.

## Segue

That's a big part of what we learn about God and ourselves in our text today at an event commonly referred to as Pentecost. When the Spirit came, it wasn't like a soft breeze or a warm, private feeling. It was with a sound **like** a violent wind and there were tongues **like** fire that rested on each believer, and a message of God's greatness that exploded into every necessary language at once.

Why? **To make it unmistakably clear that Christianity is not powered by human effort, cleverness, or passion. It is powered by God Himself.** The Spirit came in unstoppable, uncontainable power, because **what God was about to launch in His church was something no human being could manufacture, no culture could monopolize, and no earthly power could stop.** Jesus promised His disciples in Acts 1:8 that they would "receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you," and boy was He true to His word. And from this experience, I want to share **three things about the Holy Spirit** and its purpose in our lives and in the church.

## Body

### The Spirit is God's Power for our Weakness (VV. 1-2)

The first thing I want you to see in this text is that the Holy Spirit is **God's Power for our Weakness**. Look at vv. 1-4a with me.

*1 When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound **like** that of a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were staying.*

When the Spirit came at Pentecost, He came like a violent wind—something no one could manufacture, no one could predict, no one could produce on their own. Luke is careful to say it wasn't actually a gale force wind, but it was *like* that—so strong, so overwhelming, that everyone felt it and heard it. And this is really important because it shows us that this wasn't an inner emotional rush that the disciples drummed up from within themselves. They didn't dig down deep and get themselves all psyched up for the big ministry push. Far from it. It was power from outside of them, power from heaven, power that they did not have in themselves. That's what it means to be filled with the Spirit: God's strength invading our weakness, God's power coming from the outside in.

And that truth runs completely against what our inner selves tell us and therefore what culture tells us. Our own hearts and the world say, "You're fine. You're good. The problem is everyone else. The problems are all outside of you. If you'll just dig deep and believe in yourself, you can fix anything wrong with you."

Congregation, that is a lie as old as Cain and Abel, and is therefore quite contrary to all the Bible says about the human condition. The Bible says that the problem is in here—my sin, my pride, my deceptively sick heart—and the solution is out there: God Himself, sending His Spirit to dwell within us.

That's why the coming of the Spirit is such good news. **He is power for our weakness**. You don't have to manufacture enough strength, wisdom, or willpower to change yourself. You can't. **The Spirit is God's power for your weakness**. He comes in like a rushing wind to do what you could never do on your own—transform your heart, write His law within you, and give you the courage to live for Christ.

### The Spirit is God's Person for our Joy

**The Spirit is also God's person for our joy**. Take a look at vv. 3-4a.

*3 They saw tongues **like** flames of fire that separated and rested on each one of them. 4 Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ...*

When the Spirit came at Pentecost, the disciples didn't just hear the sound like a rushing wind—they saw something like tongues of fire resting on each believer.

In the Old Testament, fire always means God's holy presence: a blazing torch with Abraham, a burning bush with Moses, a pillar of fire in the wilderness, the fiery glory on Sinai. And in those experiences, that fire was always overwhelming, even dangerous.

But at Pentecost something new happened—God's fire didn't stay on a mountain or in a temple. It came to rest on *each* believer. The glory of God that once consumed now, in Acts 2, comforts. The presence of God that once stayed at a distance now, at Pentecost, dwells within His people. ***Every Christian is now, in a sense, a burning bush—the person of God is alive within them.***

And as you can tell from the passage, the presence of God in the believers brought a FEARLESS JOY!<sup>1</sup> Look at v. 13. *Some sneered and said, "They're drunk on new wine."*

Some of the folks didn't respond this way because they were babbling nonsense. They recognized that all the languages were being spoken. They recognized that great works of God were being spoken. This is a reference to the **demeanor** by which the great things of God were being spoken in other languages. They were too joyful to care what people thought. They were too happy to be afraid of anything.

If you (or someone you know) have ever been tipsy/buzzed/happy-drunk, then you understand what Luke is conveying. Alcohol can have a similar effect. It takes away your inhibitions, which makes you feel pretty happy and results in a type of fearless behavior. Now, alcohol does this according to its chemistry, which is as a depressant. It "depresses" your brain function. So the reason you're happy when you're drunk is because you are less capable ... less aware ... you can't think as straight. So the things that bothered you when you were sober you are no longer fully aware of, and that leads to happiness. It's a temporary happiness rooted in ignorance.

The Holy Spirit gives you lasting joy through intelligence. The Holy Spirit makes you more aware of reality. As a result, the things that were bothering you become small. That's why the crowd thought the disciples were drunk—they were overflowing with fearless joy. But unlike drunkenness, which dulls reality, the Spirit sharpens it. He reminds you that the God who rules the universe delights in you, will never let you go, and has secured your eternity. And when that sinks in, it makes you so joyfully fearless that you don't care what people think.

## The Spirit is God's Presence for our Ministry

A third thing we see in this passage is that **the Spirit is God's presence for our ministry.**

If you read vv. 4-12, you'll see that the Holy Spirit filled the disciples, enabling them to speak in languages they had never learned so that people from every nation heard the wonders of God

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<sup>1</sup> Derived from Keller, 1995 sermon.

in their own tongue. The crowd was amazed and confused—some astonished at God’s power, while others mocked, accusing them of being drunk. This wasn’t meaningless babble or “speaking in tongues” the way you read about in some of the epistles. It was the mighty acts of God proclaimed with clarity across cultures.

The Spirit of God is God’s presence in us for the purpose of gospel ministry to the WORLD. The Spirit comes to point us outward, to give us words, courage, and opportunity to declare the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you’re really Spirit filled, the power of the Spirit and the joy of the Spirit are found in the gospel and result in your proclaiming the gospel. The Spirit is God’s presence in you for gospel ministry.

Allow me to double-click on this, because the implications of this are very real and relevant to us right now.

The first thing I want to draw out here is that Christians and the church are supposed to be on **MISSION**. Sometimes we get lazy. Sometimes we get busy. Sometimes we get distracted. But to have the Spirit is to be on gospel mission. So first of all, let’s just check our posture or our mindset as a congregation. Do we have a mission mindset? Are we thinking and acting and behaving and resourcing and deciding and choosing like we are a church on **MISSION?**

And I do mean **GOSPEL** mission.

Christians and their churches often get confused about what a GOSPEL mission looks like. We make key leaders the mission. We make friends the mission. We make ministry programs the mission. We make buildings or spaces the mission. But all of these are just PROVISIONS FOR THE GOSPEL MISSION. Congregation, let’s don’t confuse God’s provisions for the mission. We are on a GOSPEL mission.

And there’s more here. Remember in Acts 1, Jesus was with His disciples post-resurrection and told them in v. 5 that they were going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit? Their response to that in v. 6 is fascinating.

*6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?”*

Even after walking for three years with Jesus ... even after the crucifixion ... even after the resurrection ... the disciples wanted or expected not a gospel mission but a NATIONAL mission.

The differences between a gospel mission and a national mission are night and day, but it is very tempting to sign up for a national mission. (SLIDE: National or Gospel Mission)

A national mission is limited to one people, one land, one culture.

A gospel mission expands to every people, every land, every culture.

A national mission depends on law, political authority, military strength, or social influence.

A gospel mission depends on God in prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit.

A national mission seeks to restore political control, prosperity, and national prominence.  
A gospel mission seeks to proclaim salvation in Christ, making disciples of all nations.

A national mission seeks cultural security in a kingdom of men.  
A gospel mission seeks eternal security in the kingdom of God.

A national mission defines people by ethnicity, heritage, and borders.  
A gospel defines people by their union with Christ, crossing all borders.

A national mission is temporary, rising and falling with kingdoms of men.  
A gospel mission is eternal, advancing until Christ returns and His kingdom is complete.

A national mission celebrates the strength and wisdom of men and their abilities.  
A gospel mission celebrates the weakness of men and the folly of the cross.

A national mission measures success by political sovereignty and cultural dominance.  
A gospel mission measures success by faithful witness and transformed lives in Christ.

Before the Spirit, the disciples of Jesus sought a national mission.  
After the Spirit, the disciples of Jesus went on a gospel mission.

I ask you, Beech Haven: ***Are you using the gospel for a national mission, or are you on a gospel mission for the good of all nations? Are you trying to use the gospel, or live the gospel?*** Because a church empowered by the Holy Spirit is on a gospel mission, and only the gospel mission can plant the unwavering hope of Jesus in every generation.

## Conclusion/Application

A church with the power, person, and presence of the Holy Spirit is on a gospel mission. The applications of this message for Christians and the church are “legion,” but let me focus on just one of them before bringing this passage to bear on those of you who are not yet Christians.

### Global in Perspective

This is a passage that speaks directly to one of the core outcomes we are pursuing as a church. As the hope of Jesus is cultivated in us, one of the things that happens is that we develop a **global perspective**, and you can see why that would be the case in our passage today. **No culture, language, or people group has pride of place in the kingdom of God.** The Spirit breaks down barriers and makes the gospel accessible to everyone, everywhere. Other religions spread by running over cultures, making them look just the culture of origin. But Christianity is the most culturally diverse movement in history because the Spirit empowers ordinary people to speak about Jesus in ways that honor other people groups and cultures. That is why we expect to see maturing Christians have a global perspective.

Beech Haven, do we understand that Christianity is not merely white anglo-saxon protestantism? Do we grasp that God is at work building a kingdom of all nations, not a nation of one people group? Do we participate in some way with God's mission outside my culture? This is how the Spirit cultivates the unwavering hope of Jesus in every generation—crossing cultures, breaking barriers, and planting hope where it has never been before.

## A Call to Faith

For those of you who are not yet Christians, let me make this applicable to you.

I have said that the Holy Spirit (God is One God, Three Persons ... it's a whole thing) is power for our weakness, a person for our joy, and presence for our ministry.

So here is my invitation to you.

- **The Spirit is power for your weakness.** Stop trying to fix yourself from the inside out. Acknowledge that the problem is deeper than you can solve, and ask God's Spirit to transform you.
- **The Spirit is a person for your joy.** What you're chasing in temporary highs, God offers in lasting joy. The Spirit wants to make God's love real to you in a way nothing else can.
- **The Spirit is God's presence for ministry.** The gospel comes to you in your own "language"—your culture, your story. That's God inviting you in. Will you respond to His call?

## Closing Prayer

*Father, we thank You for sending the Spirit, Your power for our weakness, Your presence for our joy, and Your courage for our mission. We confess how often we try to live in our own strength, or drift into smaller purposes than the one You've called us to. Forgive us, Lord, for trading gospel mission for comfort, distraction, or self-made plans.*

*Spirit of God, fill us afresh. Make us a people who live with fearless joy, who walk in integrity, who love beyond ourselves, who start from Scripture, and who share life together in the hope of Christ. May Your fire rest on every generation in our church family, so that the unwavering hope of Jesus would take root in our homes, in our community, and to the ends of the earth.*

*And for those here who do not yet know this hope, draw them even now. Let them see that the Spirit has come for them too—to bring forgiveness, to give joy that never fades, and to welcome them into Your family through Jesus Christ.*

*We pray, Lord, that You would send us out as witnesses—bold, joyful, and humble—until every tongue confesses that Jesus is Lord. In His powerful name we pray, Amen.*