

I Believe in God...But I Don't Rely on His Power

Welcome/Prayer

Foreword

Throughout this sermon series, "A Christian Atheist," we've noted that, while we may believe in God, we often give Him little thought in our everyday lives. When that happens, we are living as though the Lord doesn't even exist, and that makes us little different from atheists who don't believe in God at all. In a culture that esteems self-sufficiency and seemingly caters to egocentrism, it's understandable that we would follow suit and appear to be Christian atheists wherein we believe in God but don't rely on His power.

Introduction

According to Luke's gospel, the end of Jesus' earthly ministry is described similarly to His introduction to the world; both contain the word, "power." Jesus instructs His disciples to continue His ministry after His return to heaven, and to wait for God's *power* to fall upon them in their subsequent ministries...which is exactly what happened. The first believers exhibited great power through their words and their deeds. Accordingly, to be a Christian is to have incredible power.

1. Describe some ways in which Jesus and the Early Christians demonstrated God's power.
2. What adjectives would people use to describe Christians today?
3. Give examples of ways that we rely on our own strength, rather than on God's power?

Preparation

Read aloud the key scripture related to today's message.

Luke 24:49 (NLT)

"And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."

Break it Down

Recall from the message the video from an episode of *Candid Camera*. The clip featured a joke played on mechanics where a driver pulled her car into a gas station for service. The joke was that the car had no engine. The service attendants were dumbstruck in that they knew a car could not run without an engine. The analogy is that we, as followers of Christ, are no different than a car without an engine when we don't rely on God's power in our lives. Outwardly everything looks okay, but a closer look reveals that we are operating without power.

We need God's power if...

1) We're going to travel anywhere but downhill.

There are times in our lives when we seem to be able to get along just fine on our own (i.e., we're "coasting" through life). There are times, though, when we're facing uphill battles and can't coast that we need to rely on God's power.

Power for holiness

Most of us feel helpless against the power of sin and harmful habits. The reason for that is because we're fighting with our own strength. There is incredible power at our disposal if we will only use it. The power of God's Holy Spirit roots out and displaces sin and evil in our lives; with that power at work within us, sin doesn't stand a chance. It can and will be removed, and we become who God intended us to be—holy and set apart from the things of this world.

1. Share about a sin or habit you're trying (or have tried) to stop by your willpower alone. How well is that approach working (or how did it work)?
2. How have you experienced God's power in helping you overcome sin and temptation?.

Power for healing

Jesus demonstrated in His earthly ministry that God's power is available for healing. We can tap into that same power through prayer. There is no situation beyond repair when we use God's power through prayer.

1. What are some of the ways in which people today are "broken?"
2. Share how you've experienced God's healing (e.g., spiritually, emotionally, physically, or relationally).

Power for hope

It is easy to lose hope because we face many hopeless situations from a human perspective. According to Paul, the same power that raised Christ from the dead is now available to us (ref. Ephesians 1:18-20). Now THAT is a powerful hope for us to embrace!

1. What are some hopeless situations people face in our world?—in our community?
2. How has the power of hope helped you through a difficult situation?

2) We're going to be of use to other people.

A car without an engine might be okay to look at and might even get us where we're going if we're able to coast all the way there; but, a car without an engine is no use to other people. The size of the engine is directly proportional to the power of the vehicle. Accordingly, the more of God's power we have, the greater good we can do.

Power to witness for Jesus

We need power to witness to others because it's a hard thing to do. Witnessing to others is the primary reason for pouring out His Holy Spirit on God's people (ref. Acts 1:8 NCV).

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word, *witness*? How do you feel about witnessing to others?
2. Has God ever given you the power to share your faith with someone else? Explain.

Power to minister in Jesus' name

We need power from on high...power to witness about Jesus and power to minister in His name. When the first disciples were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, they not only said something (witnessed), but they also did something—they healed, cast out demons, even raised the dead. How?—"by the powerful name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 4:10 NLT).

1. Where/how have you seen God's power at work during a time of ministry or service?
2. Share about a time someone ministered to you and the effect it had on you.

3) We're going to fulfill our intended purpose.

Human beings have been created by God for a purpose, namely to honor our Creator and to carry out His divine work in this world. In order for that to happen, we must exhibit powerful, Spirit-filled lives. Our destiny as such, is to have divine power visible and active in our lives.

1. What does a Christian who relies on God's power look like?
2. What are some of the things he/she says or does to fulfill his/her purpose?

Conclusion

When we tend to be self-reliant and depend on our own strength, we'll soon discover that we are missing an essential ingredient in our lives, namely God's power. If you believe in God, don't act like a Christian atheist; instead live like a true believer and rely on God's power.

1. What is an area of your life where you need to experience God's power? Ask and you shall receive.

Close in Prayer