

REPENTANCE TO THE WORD OF GOD

Acts 2:42–47

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We're at the end of Acts 2. We've been going along through this book and noting that the first chapter dealt with the scope of events from the resurrection to Pentecost. Then chapter 2 itself deals with the Day of Pentecost and subsequent events. We've gone through the event of the Day of Pentecost and noted that it's not a twenty-four-hour day, but an epoch in time. That the promise of the Holy Spirit is available to all. That we are living in the last days, the A.M., which is the pouring out of the Spirit, the P.M., which are the cosmic signs, the breakup of the universe. That when the Holy Spirit falls on the Day of Pentecost, believers all together praise God in languages they do not know. The sound of their praising God attracts a crowd. But the net result of unbelievers hearing believers speaking in tongues is not to convict them of the power of God but simply to cause them to be bewildered or amazed or amused. It is the clear preaching of Jesus Christ of Nazareth which brings a result in the crowd of repentance toward God and faith in Him. We must always remember that. That spiritual gifts have their limited purpose and focus. In this particular case, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as it related to the crowds, was something that simply attracted curiosity and the Spirit used that to get the crowd interested in the plain speech and the articulated speech of Peter, the apostle, who declares Jesus Christ of Nazareth, a man accredited by God, was raised by God. Death could not hold Him. The essential of our faith rests not in some kind of teaching philosophy, the essentials of our faith rise and fall on the act of history that Jesus has risen from the dead. It's on the basis of that that the Lord builds His church.

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When we left off last time, we noted that there are some characteristics that the church is to have if it's going to be a valid church and a biblical church. We noted three of them, that the first thing that must be done to constitute the church is that it must be a community of those who've repented. There's no shortcut into the kingdom of God. You can't get in by osmosis. You can't get in because your parents were Christians. You can't get in because you're a member of the Assemblies of God, the Baptist church, the Catholic Church, or whatever. It is a volitional decision. One must repent. One must embrace the way of Christ. You must change your mind about who Jesus is. There's no admittance to the church without repentance. It's the first word. It's not even the word "believe" that's the common word today. And I think, by the way, we do something that is not right to people when we only stress the word "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Because if you try to paint over a wall that needs scraping, you're just inviting trouble down the road. If you're in the work of construction repair, you need to scrape that old stuff off to get the new coat to lay as it should. There's no sense believing in the Lord Jesus Christ if there's not a determination in the heart to turn your life over to God and ask Him to thoroughly change you. That's the whole idea of repentance—to change your mind, to change your life. It's foundational to the Christian life; and repentance, as we will see as we go along through the New Testament, is not something that is simply an act which occurred when we became a Christian. Repentance becomes necessary whenever we step outside of God's will, in any area or arena of our life.

So the believer is always called, as a basis of our membership in Christ, to carry fresh repentance. So that we do not accumulate things in our life which are contrary to God's clear and express will for us. Repentance is a necessary condition that's meant to be ever-present in our hearts. It can't be something that is old. It must be fresh and new.

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Repentance is then followed by water baptism. That's a once-and-for-all act. We do it and we bear witness of an inward change through that physical act. Then the third thing that is a common denominator is that the promise of the Holy Spirit is for all. The Lord intended for His people to be continually dependent on Him for His work in their lives. The Christian life is not being given a textbook and saying, "Here are the eleven ways you do it. If you follow these eleven steps, you're always going to have spiritual faith and victory." Or, "If you buy my book and send an offering of five dollars, I will show you the key to spiritual prosperity and health." I wish it were that simple! But the spiritual life is a relationship with God, and with it comes a relationship, an ever-present, up-to-date experience with the Holy Spirit. This promise of the Holy Spirit, as we noted last week, had audible, hearing qualities and was also that which was heard and spoken. This baptism in the Spirit is available for all. The promise is for all. Therefore, a church or individual not walking in the charismatic endowment of the Spirit—the gift which the Spirit seeks to bring us of His presence in our life—is losing a vital component of their walk. As we look at verses 42–47, we're going to pick up ten other characteristics. And all totaled, these thirteen characteristics of a vibrant church are meant to be the backbone of what the congregation—the local church, this church—is meant to be. As you look through these components, I want you to keep in mind the difference between the connective or the conjunctive "or" and the conjunction "and."

If, for example, I say to you, "It is acceptable that you give me a five dollar bill or a book," then you can do either, can't you? You have your choice, either way. But if I say to you, "In order to satisfy that payment, you must give me five dollars and a book," it means you don't have a choice. Both those things must be present.

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When we look through these thirteen characteristics of what is integral to the life of the church, we're looking at the conjunction "and," not the conjunction "or." Even though the conjunction may not be stated, it is assumed in the text that these components are necessary—all of them—for the well-functioning of the body of Christ. And to the degree that we find any one of them missing in our life or the life of our church, that should be a cause for tremendous concern and prayer, and we need to pray that through until all thirteen become present and powerful in expressing reality. If they're not all present, it's like a motor that's not firing on all of its cylinders. It's just sputtering down the road.

I named three qualities to start out with. But I want to note that, of the thirteen qualities that are articulated as essential components of life in the church, the body of Christ, ten of them are our responsibility. Three of them are God's responsibility alone. We'll identify, as we go along, which ten are ours and which three are God's. The three that are God's, we can't force His hand on. I suppose all we can do is simply say, "Lord, we have done the things that You have asked of us. Now it will be Your will and Your disposition and sovereignty and Your favor to grant the others." The things that we can do—one, repent; and two, be baptized. The third thing, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is something that we do in cooperation with the sovereignty of God, to pour out His Spirit upon us. He must graciously be willing to do that for us.

As we look at the other ten one other things, I want to say, one of the limitations of preaching is that our text for tonight is Acts 2:42–47. Then I'll go on to Acts 3. I wonder, sometimes, if I do the congregation justice by doing that. I wonder if it's not more sound, biblically and methodologically, to say, "We are going to stay on this point until everything has happened. If it takes fifty-two Sunday nights in a row to preach the same text until it all happens, we won't move on." I'm not telling you that's the way I'm going to go, but that's the way I feel. One of the

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things I see happening in our American Christianity is that we eat a great deal but we digest very little. So we keep eating and eating and eating and there is not the absorption, not the digestion of the truth, so it simply becomes intellectual truth. We know that, it's in our head. We know the church ought to be that way. But we haven't taken the time to let it sink in on us until we actually live that way, until we actually are that way in its total expression. That's a concern of mine.

I believe you're here this evening because you want to be a part of a biblical church and you want to see God move in your life and in this church and in this community, or you wouldn't be investing this evening here. I'm doing my best to come prepared for the fresh perception and anointing that the Spirit might have for us. Because I want that in my life too. I don't want to go on just because it's time in the lecture, to move to the next point. I don't want to go on until we've got it. If you're here this evening and there's a lack of repentance in your life, then don't go on with me to point four. Just stay in point one until it's worked out—between you and God, between me and God. Repentance. Baptism—if you haven't been baptized in water and you're a believer, we have a baptismal service scheduled. Be baptized. Don't argue with the Lord about it. Just go do it. Get it done. If you haven't made yourself available for the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Spirit, make yourself available for that.

“They devoted themselves,” the Scripture says. The fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh qualities all fall together in Acts 2:42. “They devoted themselves.” If Peter were an evangelist in the contemporary sense, he would have a good report to write for the denominational periodical, *The Pentecostal Evangel* or whatever denomination he'd be a member of. He'd have said, “I went to Jerusalem. I stood up and preached. Three thousand people were converted. It was a marvelous meeting.” That's true. But what happens to those three thousand people?

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Acts 2:42–47 is essential because it talks about incorporation. It is not enough to have harvesting if there is not incorporation. There must not only be a belief in Jesus Christ. There must be a living in His way and the power of His Spirit. This small community of a hundred and twenty believers had an enormous task ahead of them, to not only assimilate the three thousand who are coming in but to let the quality of life that the hundred and twenty have be the quality of life that the three thousand have.

In the church, for example, suppose that next Sunday, in addition to you all here, we have three thousand more people show up who have come to Christ that week as a result of the ministry and witness of this church. We'd have to be meeting outside or we'd have a triple deck piling up in here. It would be great. What would be some of the worries and concerns? "So few of us and now we don't have a cozy group anymore... I don't know anybody in this church anymore. It's no fun going to where you don't know people... All those three thousand people! I've been following the Lord for years and they don't know anything about the Lord. They're probably going to get elected to the church before you know it. We're going to have compromise all over the place. They don't know the Lord like we know Him."

I suppose, in a certain sense, all of those are real concerns. Is the essential nature of what happened as a mix, a spiritual mix with the hundred and twenty, is it going to be adulterated and weakened by the lives of these three thousand new believers coming into the church? Who's going to affect whom?

One of the things that the Early Church does, to me one of the great miracles of the Day of Pentecost, is acknowledge the three thousand people being saved; but to me as a pastor, the most incredible miracle is that all these people got incorporated into the church. Not only that, but the three thousand became like the hundred and twenty. The hundred and twenty didn't become like

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the three thousand. There was a power of the leaven—using leaven as a positive symbol. There was the power of the leaven that was in the hundred and twenty that became part and parcel of the life of the three thousand.

One of the reasons why I feel, as a pastor, I want to dwell on this theme is I look upon all of you here this evening as the hundred and twenty. You're the core of this church. Anybody who comes out again on Sunday night has either got to be from the Assemblies of God or overly religious or something. Most people stay home. You're the core. I'm counting on you to be the vanguard of what God is going to do in this community. It's essential that we, as the core and the vanguard, express among us what the characteristics of a church are so that, as God adds—and He may want to add phenomenally and supernaturally—we can immediately be in a place to let the life of Christ in us be imparted to others, so that they enter into essential Christianity rather than the church being corrupted through a hoard of people that come in that simply don't know anything about the Lord and bring their non-Christian lifestyles with them and direct the church in a way that loses its effectiveness. These hundred and twenty cannot be selfish people. They have to be people who are willing to assume responsibility for the new life that God is going to place in the church. That's not easy.

These three thousand came in.

I. The fourth characteristic: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

Just a phrase on the word “devoted,” because it relates to characteristics four, five, six and seven.

“Devoted” means “to strongly adhere to, to strongly persist in, to be adamantly committed to.”

The word “devoted” is an extremely strong word. It tosses out the idea of elective. We have electives in the church. We have electives in college. But this is a core requirement, and it must

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be adhered to or there cannot be the total dynamic that is needed within the body of Christ. They devoted themselves to these things, to the apostles' doctrine or teaching.

Let's understand that right off the bat, doctrine is important in the formation of the church. I realize that, as Pentecostal and charismatic people, we have often made the mistake of sublimating doctrine to experience. We've been so excited about our experience with the Lord that, as long as the person has the experience, we haven't troubled ourselves too much with doctrine. Somehow, that's kind of a fringe kind of a thing and can be easily dispensed with. But it can't be. Because what we believe it is essential to experience and it's essential that we not be caught up in a subjective experience with God that is without an objective reality or content.

I sometimes use the following illustration: If I brought people up here who were testifying to their religion—and everybody argued their experience, who's to tell whose experience is more valid? The only way you can determine whether experience is valid is if it's backed up by anything that is objectively true. That's why the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so foundational to the Christian experience, because if you toss that out, everything else is just like any other religion. But that objective reality creates the possibility of a real subjective experience with God. An emotional experience. An experience that reaches into the heart.

If we throw out doctrine, we throw out objectivity. The word for "doctrine" is the word from which we derive the English word "didactic," meaning "teaching that flows in logical sequence."

I know that there are some people who mistakenly believe that all the early New Testament and Early Church preachers did was open their mouth and the Lord filled it. But if you read the teaching of Jesus, you will always find this highly organized structure. I can take you through any passage in the Gospels where Jesus teaches, and I can show you His statement of purpose

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and the theme of His sermon and His outline and His supporting illustrations. It lends itself to memory and to structure.

This Early Church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. That is to say they were not into—even at that early stage of the church—non-apostolic revelations. Here is the birth date of the Church, the first day of the Church, the Day of Pentecost and from then on, what was the church devoting itself to? Not to who had the latest revelation. Not to who had the latest doctrinal truth. It was doctrine as defined by the apostles. Not one apostle (notice it's in the plural). It was the commonality of teaching held to be the apostles. The church has always used that as an anchor pin. Woe be its safety if it departs from that. It's got to be what the apostles were teaching. If you can't prove it from the apostles, if it wasn't in the doctrine of Peter and Paul and James and John, it shouldn't be in the doctrine of the church. It has no place. There is no place for the teaching.

As a charismatic and Pentecostal, I am so upset with what passes as spirituality and spiritual teaching in the body of Christ. I think it is time that the local Christians and local churches called the Christian television media to order on doctrine. It is ridiculous what passes for Christian teaching on the television set. I'm tired of personalities that are trotted out, night after night, to simply introduce the latest hot revelation they've got from God. I say we ought to send them back to the prayer closet, send them to seminary, send them to Bible School, where they can learn something without trotting all this junk on the Christian public. I don't know how, except to cut off the financial water. I'm getting to be enough of a cynic about media ministries to believe the only thing they understand is not the Holy Spirit. It's not doctrine. It's money.

The church has got to be called back to doctrine. It's got to be called back to the main things, the plain things. It's Jesus, Savior, Healer, Baptizer and returning King that are the essential

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elements of our faith. You don't need something new. We need to hear the Scripture—love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself. That's about all we need. Everything else is simply an exposition of that. I don't need some spiritual guru to tell me what's going to happen.

The doctrine of the apostles is the bench line of the church. It cannot be departed from.

The Early Church knew better than to do that. They stayed right there with what were the apostles' teachings. Right there, in the apostles doctrine. We might ask, what did they have as a textbook? They had the words of Jesus. That's what their doctrine was. All the New Testament does after the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, is explain and develop for our understanding the teaching of Jesus. So they took the Sermon on the Mount, the Olivet Discourse, the teaching of the parables and they also took the activity of the Lord, His sinless life, His saving death, His resurrection and His ascension. Out of that flows Christian dogma and doctrine.

The doctrine is not something complex. It's something very basic and essential to our life. We need to revive the catechism in the church, these things we most surely believe and are held among us. The doctrine of the apostles. They devoted themselves to that. That was after repentance. After baptism and after the promise of the Spirit. That was right there, front and center.

But that's not all.

II. They devoted themselves also to fellowship, the apostles' fellowship.

That word “fellowship” gets us to the word *koinonia*. That's the word that's used in the Greek language here—*koinonia*. It simply means that once the Lord has brought us in a vertical relationship with Him, He brings us in a relationship, a spiritual relationship, with other persons.

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The Christian life is not meant to be a lonely life. It's meant to be a life where we come alongside one another.

I have found, as a Christian, a struggling Christian sometimes, a growing Christian, that one of the ways that I grow best in fellowship is to open up my life to other people in significant ways. I grow in *koinonia*. I'm not wearing a mask of pastor, but to share in a significant way my struggles, my longings, my needs and my sins with persons I dearly love in the Lord. It's that walking in trust and in confidence with one another. We can't obviously *koinonia* on deeper levels with everyone we know, but each of us needs to move deeper in fellowship with the body of Christ and not live lonely lives. Take time for the face-to-face interaction.

I know some of you have expressed to me "I'm so glad you didn't have us all stand up, face one another, join hands and pray. That makes me so nervous. I don't like to do that." I understand that. I don't like to hold a sweaty palm either. Especially when I don't know the person. Yet, isn't there value when we just take time, even with a stranger, and say, "I acknowledge your presence as another human being." But as part of our transaction in relationship, I also want to acknowledge the possibility of a spiritual bond between us. We can't articulate this all, I realize. I want to acknowledge a spiritual bond between us and I know no better way to affect that bond than to just have a brief moment of prayer with you. That's *koinonia*. It's not simply partying together, golfing together, going out to eat together. That's all part of fellowship. But *koinonia*, by its very definition, has a spiritual component to it, where we share something about the Lord in our transaction of human relationship. It's more than being pals. It's more than being friends. It's that Jesus Himself is part and party to that relationship we are having with one another.

When there's real *koinonia*, then the three thousand people coming in from outside immediately feel embraced. Otherwise, what they're going to get, if they just get the apostles' doctrine, is a

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lot of teaching. They'll walk away with their notebooks full, but they won't walk away being affirmed and received and helped and welcomed and loved. That's what *koinonia* is about. It's essential for the church to have it.

One of the things that's grieved me over the years is that people make the criticism, "That was a cold church." Or, "Nobody said hi to me." I immediately get defensive and say, "Do you say hi to anybody yourself?" But on the other hand, I recognize that for a church to be vibrant and alive, it must be alert and on its toes for persons who are walking into its midst, that they share something of the life of Christ with them. That involves more than the acknowledgement of a person's presence. It's a recognition of people who gather for congregation and for worship. That there may be a person in the worship service sitting next to you who has not braved a church service in twenty years and this is the one moment in their life where they got up in the morning and said, "Before I check out of this life and never walk in a church door again, I'm going to give it one last shot." If you knew that the person sitting next to you that day had come with that frame of mind, you would reach out in significant ways to them, beyond just a casual handshake and introduction.

We need to be having that sensitivity. It's not only important when we gather together for worship or any other setting, but it's important that the congregation come with a sense of expectancy, that is a connection at that moment that the body of Christ has with one another—we're going to *koinonia* together. We're going to share our life together. We're not just all going to set vertical and all face the preacher. We're going to turn and face one another.

We're going to carry that atmosphere of *koinonia* right out of the structure of the sanctuary into our homes and into our lives, where we welcome and embrace one another so there are no lonely

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people and no prayer requests that go unnoticed or unmentioned. Bind us together, Lord, with cords that cannot be broken.

III. Another thing they devoted themselves to was the breaking of bread.

In our parlance, that becomes “communion.” Only, what we’ve done to communion, I’ll bet the Lord give account for it when we stand before Him. I struggle with that because I know when we have communion, on the first Sunday of the month, that we have done a *Readers’ Digest* version of a holy ordinance that God gave the church. He never intended that it be grape juice and crackers ten minutes at the end of a Sunday morning worship service. It’s supposed to be a meal. That’s what the breaking of bread is. And part of the breaking of bread is the taking of the cup and the breaking of bread as a sacramental sign, that that was more than just an eating experience. It was a transaction. God was involved. The broken bread was the broken life of Christ. The grape juice or new wine, whatever it was, was the sign of the shed blood of Christ. A part of Christians eating together was always a sacramental sign of Christ’s presence in our midst.

You have my permission, by the way, to have communion in your home. Get a group together and say, “We’re going to have dinner at my house and as part of that, we’re going to share communion together.” That’s breaking bread together. We’ll still have it on Sunday morning during the last ten minutes, but we need the fuller manifestation of that.

In fact, in these characteristics of the church, one of the things we’ll pick up is that Christians eat with one another in the first century. Eating is almost a lost art in our culture. Maybe one of the things we’re going to have to do to be a biblical church is rediscover what it is to have a meal together.

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How do you eat at your house? How we eat at our house is so non-biblical it embarrasses me.

We don't have time to eat. We're on the run, like crazy, and most of our eating is at Coco's and others.

The whole art of eating together, spending the hours in food preparation, with company around and people talking and then sitting down to a meal and leisurely eating the meal. Without turning on the evening news. Without watching the World Series. I wonder if the Early Church would have done as well if they had the temptations that we have in this culture. Sometimes we look at the Early Church with this halo. But if they had had the distractions that we have, they might have flunked out. Maybe this is the strongest church there's ever been in the history of mankind because we have the most reason to not gather. We have electricity, for example! They were eating by candlelight. What movie show were you going to go to in Jerusalem? Where were you going to go to watch a pro-football game or basketball game or baseball game or hockey game? Who's going to turn on a TV or radio or stereo?

They had time to meet together. Maybe all we've got to do to be biblical people is, one night a week, throw all that junk out and say, "This is fellowship night." We're having our friends over, other Christians, and we're going to invite an unsaved person we know. We're not going to do the Four Spiritual Laws, but we're going to put them smack dab in the middle of Christian fellowship and see if some of it will get through by osmosis.

The breaking of bread. It's become a lost art in our culture. I don't know really if I know how to do it! That's an assignment for us all to work on—breaking bread together.

IV. And they prayed. They devoted themselves to prayer.

It was not an elective, an option. They did it several ways. The Book of Acts tells us how they did it. They did it personally—personal prayer. They did it at defined times. Because they were

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good Jews, they were used to certain hours of the day being set aside for prayer. So we find, for example, Peter going into the temple, in Acts 3, at the hour of prayer, which we know to be nine o'clock in the morning. He was also there at three o'clock in the afternoon. Because those were set hours when people gathered for prayer. Daniel prayed at set times—morning, noon and night. They devoted themselves to prayer. So there was individual personal prayer, there was structured opportunities in the day for prayer. And there was also informality of prayer, when believers gathered together and prayed with one another and for one another.

All those were manifestations of prayer. Prayer was part and parcel of the ongoing life of the church. The church today can't be absent of it, either. Really seek the Lord. Let the lord build the house. "Unless the Lord builds the house," as the Psalm goes, "they labor in vain to build it."

So we're moving into essential ingredients of the church—doctrine, *koinonia*, breaking of bread and prayer. Look at what's missing! Departmental programs. I like departmental programs. This church is filled with departmental programs. We'll probably get more specialized because today's culture needs departmental programs, I think. The point I want to make is that departmental programs can never be a substitute for one of these original elements. Never.

The basic life of the church is spelled out for us in Acts. We've got to adhere to it if we're going to be a biblical church.

V. The eighth characteristic of the Early Church is that "everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles."

That's one of the things that God has to do. Nobody can work that out. One of the things I think is commonly misperceived about the Early Church is that everybody was out with electricity, pouring out, things were sparking left and right. Notice that Acts says that the miracles and signs

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were being done by the apostles. That's a very direct and explicit statement. It doesn't mean that all hundred and twenty were out doing miracles. Why did they happen only to the apostles?

I have a theory. I'm not sure that it's right. But my theory is that those tremendous events needed to take place through the hands of those people, through the lives of those people who were mature in Christ. Because, if they weren't mature in Christ, they would begin taking the credit themselves. So the Lord was also at work because He wanted to confirm the apostles' doctrine. There was no better way to confirm their doctrine than to be working through their life in miraculous ways. Does this mean that the rest of the church wasn't seeing miraculous things happen in answer to prayer? Not at all. They were seeing prayers answered. But the incredible kinds of things that shocked and stirred the whole community, were the kinds of things happening through the apostles—signs and wonders. They were mightily confirming everything, in the growth of the church.

You can't conjure those things up. They have to act as an independent operation of the Holy Spirit when He chooses to place those things in His body. All we can do is pray and ask that those things be resent.

Kathryn Kuhlman, for example, had a contemporary ministry of signs and wonders that probably, in my lifetime, was greater than any other single person on the landscape of the body of Christ. Gene Martin, her mission's director, said on one occasion that he was sitting in a service in St Louis. He said, "As I sat on the platform and watched, there came a point when it was like the Spirit of God was sweeping in waves through various sectors of that auditorium. As the Spirit of God came in a wave in a particular area, people began screaming, 'I'm healed! I'm healed!' Crutches and things were flying all over the place." He said that during the course of the evening, he actually saw, on one occasion, Kathryn Kuhlman's feet momentary leave the ground

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and she was standing with about two inches of air between the soles of her feet and the ground. She was literally swept up off the floor and held there by the Spirit of God, an incredible, miraculous manifestation. He said, as he watched, there was a man who he later found out had been brought there against his will. He was a Vietnam Vet. He was a quadriplegic. He was hooked up to a catheter. He hadn't even bothered to put something decent on. He had kind of a gown on and they'd thrown something over him. He was there, an unbeliever, against his will. And the Spirit of God, like a wave, was sweeping through the auditorium. He said, as he watched, he saw the man come straight out of the wheelchair, running down the aisle, not knowing what hit him. He was waving the catheter as he was coming down the aisle. He was instantly healed, instantly saved. Gene said he followed the man over the years, kept in contact with him, because he saw that with his own eyes that night. He said for years he tracked the man and the healing stayed and the story was valid.

When Kathryn Kuhlman passed away, people tried to walk in her shoes. "I've got the Kathryn Kuhlman anointing!" That doesn't mean you've got the power. There were all kinds of people. I had a friend, when Kathryn Kuhlman came to our church at Central Assembly in Springfield, I heard her say something like, "Everybody else falls down. But I'm not going to get near her and I'm not going to fall down." It was so funny. She was in the choir. For some reason, the choir walked in front of Kathryn Kuhlman and everybody was falling—I understand that from the Old Testament as "being slain in the Spirit." This very wonderful Christian woman tried to get away but she walked by Kathryn Kuhlman and she said, "All of a sudden, I felt myself out like a light bulb. There was power there. It wasn't psychological. It was just power.

I wish I could tell you that if you do these three things, this is going to happen in your life and ministry. It evidently is not that simple. I don't understand all the laws that are involved, but I

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believe that it is God's general intention for the church that that kind of manifestation of His Spirit be more abundantly present. And that, perhaps, one of the things on our end that blocks it is that in the ten of the thirteen categories of our responsibility, we have so many loopholes you could drive a Mac truck through of disobedience, that the Spirit is not free to work in proportion to the power that He seeks to work in. That's my only human answer. There may be more. But I want to be open to those incredible workings of the Holy Spirit that build the church. Signs and wonders do that. We need to call upon God for that. Not simply because we want to see the signs and wonders but because there are people who are so grievously wounded in life, the only thing that will save them is not a physician's hand but the hand of the Great Physician.

I'll save verse 44 for next week because that gets rather interesting. About application of social responsibility towards one another in the body of Christ.

Closing Prayer

Lord, as we come to You tonight, we believe that what happened in the Early Church was not meant to only be descriptive of that church. We believe that working through the Early Church You meant for that pattern to replicate the life of Your church in every culture, every century, every city, every place. We believe, also, that You intended that every member of Your body lend their full heart, mind and will to lining up in our personal lives with Your pattern. These characteristics of Your church we have a plumb line of Your truth by which all of our construction of Your body must be measured. You have set out a rule and if, with a free hand, we start drawing our own rule, we then wiggle our way from Your straight line of truth. Teach us, therefore, in our lives personally and in our life corporately, together, to draw a straight line and to line up exactly with hairline accuracy to what Your Word says the church is meant to be. We take, Lord, these moments to ask in these areas we've talked about tonight that this church, this

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people, might line up in exact conformity to Your will. That every repentance that needs to take place in our life will take place. That everyone will be baptized who believes. That all will wait for the Promise of the Father, all of us will be devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, prayer, availability for Your gracious miraculous work upon us. We seek this, Lord Jesus, in Your name. Amen.