

### 3. The Church's Constant Prayer

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, do turn with me, if you would, to Acts chapter 1. So our third study together tonight in the book of Acts, which, as we've said several times now, is part two of a book all about the words and the works of Jesus addressed to someone called Theophilus, probably a Roman, probably somebody of quite high rank.

The first part, of course, is Luke's Gospel. And if you look at the first verse of Acts chapter 1, it tells us that that book was all about what Jesus began to do and teach during his earthly ministry. And Acts is the second part. It's all about what Jesus continued to do and to teach after he was taken up into heaven. Now Luke says at the beginning of his Gospel in Luke chapter 1 that he's writing to Theophilus so that he and others like him might have certainty about what they've been taught, what they've been taught about Jesus.

And that means that that also is the purpose of Acts. And in the second book, Luke isn't writing so much about the Acts of the Apostles. That's what we tend to call the book, isn't it?

But rather he's writing to tell us about the Acts of Jesus. It would be better to say that Jesus' continuing words and works directed from his throne in heaven and performed through his apostles by the power of his Holy Spirit, that's the real subject of this book.

[ 1 : 3 6 ] The work of Jesus through his Spirit poured out in a truly Pentecostal church, a truly New Testament church. And Acts chapter 2, as we all know about the day of Pentecost, speaks about the beginning of a true New Testament church era.

The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is the beginning of the real New Testament church. And Luke is very clear, isn't he? He tells us that Pentecost is very much for a purpose.

If you look at verse 8 of chapter 1, he tells us the purpose for which the power of the Holy Spirit is going to come. It's for witness. Witness to Jesus to the very ends of the earth.

The church is to be a Pentecostal church, a Spirit-filled church, so that Jesus' ministry, what he began to do on earth, will be completed through the invincible power of the Holy Spirit at work in the world through his church, as he rules it from heaven.

And Acts chapter 2 signals the beginning of that, and the rest of the book of Acts records the unfolding of that in stages, as the Gospel witness begins in Jerusalem, moves out through Judea and Samaria, and ultimately towards the very ends of the earth.

[ 2 : 5 3 ] But Acts chapter 1 is a chapter of preparation, preparation for the Pentecostal church. And in it, there are three things that I think Luke wants us to be very clear about, so that we can grasp what a truly Pentecostal church, a truly missionary church, will look like, and will be like.

Now last time in verses 1 to 11, we focused on the church's certain power. And if you missed that, I would suggest that you try and listen in, either online or one of the CDs, because it is a vital message, a message about the right expectations that we should have, and that we shouldn't have, from Jesus' present rule from heaven.

Very, very important, and a source of great confusion. But we haven't got time to go over that again tonight. Tonight I want to focus on the second thing, which really comes in the second section, in verses 12 to 14.

All about the church's constant prayer. The church's constant prayer. Because not only, as we saw last time, is it true that the church can be certain of power, because the enthronement of the Son of God in heaven is real and permanent, so also, Luke wants to tell us that the church must be in constant prayer, because the expectancy of the Spirit of God on earth is real and permanent.

And that's what I want to focus on tonight, because it explains the picture that we see in verses 12 to 14, of a church in constant prayer. Now, to begin by just being frank about this paradox to do with prayer.

[ 4 : 32 ] Here we see in Acts chapter 1, the church with a promise of certain power. And yet, strangely, there seems to still be the need for constant prayer.

The call is certain. Look at verse 8. It's urgent there to be witnesses to the very ends of the earth. And the power is assured. You will receive power for this.

And yet, at the same time, Jesus says something else. He says, wait, doesn't he? In verse 5. Wait. Verse 4, sorry. Don't head off yet. Wait for the promise of the Father.

I guess as many keen, young Christians have had to learn to wait. Been raring to go for God, raring to get into his service.

But God has made them wait and learn and be prepared to be the people that God wants them to be. They've had to learn that it's God's timetable that matters. Well, anyway, it's very interesting, isn't it, when we read in the scriptures to see just how many of God's servants have to wait.

[ 5 : 33 ] Remember Moses, when we looked at him in Exodus. He was raring to go to be a leader of God's people at the age of 40. But God sent him away for another 40 years of preparation, didn't he? Later on in the book of Acts, we see the apostle Paul, eager to preach as soon as he's converted on the Damascus Road.

What happens? God sends him off to the desert for 13 years before he really begins his life's work. And in a way, it's rather similar here.

And that's because God has a timetable and we have to wait for it. Why? Well, for one thing, the ascension wasn't just an add-on to the story of Jesus.

The ascension of Jesus was the vital completion. It was the climax of all Jesus' work on earth. His life, his death, his resurrection was always heading for that day right from the very beginning.

The day of his promised exaltation, declared to be the Son of God with power as he rose and ascended, as he was set on Zion's hill as the King and the Lord.

[ 6 : 39 ] And only when the King has ascended his throne and received himself the promise of the Father, the Spirit, the Spirit of the risen, victorious, holy Son of God, only then can he pour out the gifts of victory upon the church.

Remember later on in Ephesians, Paul quotes, doesn't he, from Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4, when he had ascended on high and led a host of captives, he gave gifts to men.

It's a picture, isn't it, of a victorious king after the battle and sharing his bounty with his subjects. And so, until heaven received the victorious, risen Lord, the church couldn't possibly receive the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of that victory in his own life given to his church.

Not until then could the victory of Jesus Christ come to his church through his Spirit. So that's one reason why the apostles had to wait.

There's a second reason, I think, for the waiting and it's this. That the disciples then and all disciples since have to learn something very, very important.

[ 7 : 53 ] They have to learn that without the power of the Holy Spirit they can't do anything. Nothing at all. And that only the power of the Holy Spirit in the church makes mission even possible at all.

Because disciples have to learn that it's not really ultimately their work at all that they're doing. It's Jesus' work. It's what he began to do and it's what he is completing from heaven. Then it's a necessary paradox.

See, a church that is certain of the power that it receives from God will also always be a church constant in prayer to God. Expecting Jesus to be at work through his Spirit.

That expectancy is the true mark of a real Pentecostal church, a real missionary church. And that's what we see all the way through the Acts of the Apostles. So I want to focus tonight on these short verses that describe the church's prayer in verses 12 to 14 because, you see, Luke wants us to see that their understanding of the place of prayer is vital to their preparation to be a missionary church, a Pentecostal church.

And in particular, there are two things that stand out in these verses about the church's prayer. And if we see these two things clearly in these verses, we'll see them again and again and again all the way through the Acts of the Apostles as we read that book.

[ 9 : 22 ] They're the things that characterize the prayer of a Spirit-filled Pentecostal church, a missionary church. The church whose mission is unstoppable and unhinderable by the powers of this world or the powers of hell.

So let's look at verses 12 to 14. And the first thing that we see about this prayer is this. It's committed prayer. Verse 14, they were devoting themselves to prayer.

The prayer of a truly Pentecostal church, a truly missionary church, is committed. It's constant. It's continuing. There are three C's. You can have all of them or whichever one you like.

Because that's what the word means. Some of the translations give us persevering. They were persisting in prayer. It's the same word that's used in chapter 2 verse 42 where we read that they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship and breaking bread.

And prayer was a constant pattern. There's another C. Consistent, constant, continuing, committed prayer. You get the idea?

[10:32] They were committed to prayer. They were devoting themselves to prayer during those ten days between Jesus' ascension and the day of Pentecost.

Now, of course, this was a unique period in the church's history. It was a one-off. It was a special period, wasn't it, of waiting for the promised spirit. But, this pattern of committed prayer was far from unique.

In fact, it's characteristic. set the pattern for everything that followed in the church's life all through. And Luke flags it up here so that we will notice it and we'll see continuously all the way through the book of Acts that this is so.

And when you read Acts, you'll see that real devoted times of prayer precede almost every major movement that occurs in Acts. Every great advance of the gospel that's recorded for us.

Every one is associated with prayer. I've just mentioned chapter 2 where they were committed to the apostles' teaching and to prayer. What was the result? Chapter 2, verse 47.

[11:37] The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts chapter 4. After the first imprisonment of the apostles for the gospel, we read that they were all united together.

Notice that, in prayer. And as a result, what happened? They continued to speak the word boldly. The apostles' testimony had great power and great grace was upon all the believers.

Same in Acts chapter 6. The apostles determined to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And what happens? The word of God continues to increase.

By the way, that's the language that Luke uses for real mission. The church growth that really matters to Luke is the increase of the word of God. He uses it again and again. The word continued to increase.

In chapter 8, it's prayer that leads to the outpouring of the Spirit in the so-called Samaritan Pentecost in Samaria. In chapter 10, it's Peter's prayer, it's Cornelius' prayer that leads to the so-called Gentile Pentecost, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit so that the Gentiles had exactly the same experience as the Jews.

[12:47] And the Jews said, the Gentiles also have received the word of God. By the way, that's again what they said when they saw the Spirit of God falling upon them.

Spirit baptism to them was receiving the word of God. It's described in exactly the same thing in other terms in chapter 11, verse 18.

To the Gentiles also they said God has granted repentance that leads to life. All the same thing. God grants repentance that leads to life. God grants his Spirit. God grants them to receive the word of God.

That's the language Luke uses for what we would call conversion. But it all began with prayer. A church committed to prayer. Same in chapter 16.

Remember? Paul and Silas praying in the prison in the stocks. And what happens? A great revival begins and the household of the jailer comes to faith.

[13:45] Chapter 20 we read about them in fervent prayer on the beach with the Ephesian elders as they send off Paul to Jerusalem and ultimately on the beginning of the journey that would lead him to Rome and to the gospel getting to the very heart of the ancient world.

And you see I could instance other things but it's a constant pattern of prayer. Committed prayer. Devoted. Persevering prayer. All through the Acts of the Apostles.

That's the mark of a Pentecostal church. A missionary church. If you read the New Testament epistles you'll find exactly the same pattern is there. It's assumed.

In fact it's commanded. So Paul says in Romans 12 verse 12 Don't be slothful be fervent in spirit serve the Lord be constant in prayer.

The same word committed. Colossians 4.2 Continues steadfastly in prayer being watchful in it with thanksgiving. You see persevering committed prayer.

[ 14 : 44 ] Or Ephesians 6 verse 18 Praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication keep alert with all perseverance. Commitment same word as here in Acts chapter 1.

I could go on again but you get the point don't you? The prayer of a missionary church is committed prayer. It's continuing it's consistent it's constant it's steadfast it's persevering.

And the church must be constant in prayer because of the expectancy of God's spirit being real and being permanent because of Jesus' ascension.

But why? Why must there be constant prayer like that? We can be certain of the power of the risen Lord and of his promise that we will receive the invincible Holy Spirit for our mission.

We can be sure of all these things why should we need to pray? And for that matter if God is sovereign and knows everything why should we need to pray? Quite a good question isn't it?

[ 15 : 54 ] I wonder if you've asked yourself that at times. God obviously doesn't need to know what our needs are what our concerns are he knows them already so why should we pray? Well there's several sermons I suppose in answering that question we could go on a long time about that but let me just consider two things.

The first is very simple it's just this Jesus commands us to pray. Luke himself records that doesn't he back in his gospel in chapter 18 do you remember he told the disciples a parable to the effect that they must always pray and not give up not lose heart.

That ought to be enough for us isn't it? Even if we can't understand why we need to pray surely we can trust Jesus we can trust that he understands and if he commands us to pray well we must obey his command.

I guess there's lots of things in the Christian life we don't really understand fully but we trust the Lord Jesus on it we obey him we know that his commands are not for our ill but they're for our good they're for our blessing and if Jesus commands us to pray it must be right that we should pray.

So that's the first thing and the most basic thing but the second thing is this I think we can understand some of it at least and one thing that is abundantly clear all through the scriptures is this our God will not share his glory with another he puts it this way through the prophet Isaiah in chapter 42 I am the Lord that's my name my glory I give to no other nor my praise to carved idols you see what that means is that God will not work in such a way that there's any danger at all that we should usurp his glory that we should receive praise that's due to him that's why I think it's very significant that back in Luke 18 just after Jesus tells his disciples they must always pray and not lose heart he goes right on to tell a story about prayer do you remember the prayer of the tax collector and the Pharisee and he says which of these men really prayed and of course it's not the

[ 18 : 05 ] Pharisee is it who's standing praying loudly full of himself full of his achievements no the one who really prayed is the tax collector beating his breast fully aware of his own weakness and emptiness and need for mercy Lord have mercy on me a sinner and you see real prayer real prayer always humbles us before God doesn't it always that's so real prayer never says look at what we've done for God real prayer always says look at what God has done for me who deserves absolutely nothing look at what God has done for us and that's one reason at least isn't it why we need to pray why we need to be committed constant prayers devoted to prayer because if God is going to do great things among us then we need to know that it's God who's doing it not us we need to be in awe of his power we need to be not full of ourselves and our own efforts and that's one good reason we need to pray it means that the more active we are the more devoted we are to exploits for

Christ and the gospel the more strategic we are the more determined we are the more we need to pray it's the only safe way isn't it to save us from self importance from self congratulation which is just idolatry self worship isn't it but my glory I will give to none other nor my praise to carved idols says the Lord nor to proud Christians nor to proud churches now we've seen that demonstrated in our own life as a fellowship over this last year haven't we as we've been praying for our building project we all have but I can tell you that the building development team and those involved with them have certainly seen it we've had so many answers to prayer that have truly humbled us things that just haven't let us be smug or arrogant or pleased with ourselves because because God has extracted us from holes that we've dug sometimes for ourselves he's extracted us from situations that we just could never have got out of ourselves that means that only God can be praised for these things but that's such an encouragement to us isn't it when God does that because it lifts our eyes to heaven reminds us that

God is at work that God is alive that God is hearing our prayers that he's with us that he's working on us and so paradoxical as it may seem the more we truly do believe in God's sovereignty the

more we believe that Jesus' enthronement as Lord of the world is real and therefore the more we believe that the church does have certain power the invincible Holy Spirit with us for our mission then the more we'll be devoted to prayer the truly Pentecostal missionary church will be a church committed to pray it's the first thing that's so plain isn't it in these verses but there's a second important characteristic I think that you'll see in the church's prayer here and that is this that it's corporate prayer verse 14 again do you see all these with one accord were committed to prayer together with the women and the Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers they were together in one place well that's obvious in the upper room we're told where they were meeting must have been quite large because if you read down to verse 15 we're told the number was about 150 of them

I guess it was about the size maybe of room 6 downstairs but it was much more than just being together in one place here the language implies more than that it implies a corporate unity in their minds and in their hearts and in their purpose in their praying they were praying with one accord we're told they were united in prayer as a body it was real corporate prayer it was a body at prayer Jesus told them to wait to remain together until the promised day of Pentecost came and their natural interpretation was that they should be together united in their calling and committed to corporate prayer just what Paul wrote later on to the church at Philippi isn't it chapter 1 verse 27 he wanted them to be firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel and that's a pattern of the true missionary church and just so it was the preparation for the Pentecostal outpouring at the very start here it's a supremely corporate picture isn't it it's actually rather like the picture of the rugby scrum it has to be tightly bound it has to be squeezing and pushing together it has to be a united effort it doesn't matter how big it doesn't matter how powerful or strong your individual forwards are in your rugby team unless there's a togetherness unless there's that corporate strength pushing together coordinated then your scrum is going to go backwards or your scrum is going to collapse alas that's what tends to happen most of the time as far as I can see to the Scottish rugby team I hope it'll be better this year but that's just so for the church without that sense of corporate prayer the church will collapse and the church's missionary purpose of the gospel will be lost it's as vital as that but as we've seen the Pentecostal church did grasp that vital thing and it was the pattern all the way through Acts but notice it's not just commitment to prayer that's a pattern in Acts it is this commitment to corporate prayer

[ 24 : 06 ] Acts doesn't describe to us again and again the private devotions of individuals having quiet times on their own they did do that and did pray on their own actually we do have Peter praying on his own don't we but all the focus is on praying together in fact I wonder if you knew that every single apostolic command in the epistles and I think in the whole New Testament is a command for corporate prayer individual prayer is not on the radar it assumes that the church will be praying together with one voice prayer because you see the Bible is so down to earth it's so realistic the Bible isn't ethereal and pretend and if a church is truly united if it is with one accord if it is together in heart and mind together in its mission then that will be visible and it will be audible in a tangible reality of the church actually being together united in one voice in corporate prayer that just goes without saying for the apostles just as in the

Bible real faith is always a visible thing it's a tangible thing there's no such thing in the Bible as secret faith in your heart it's a real confession a real commitment to God's people that makes you a believer according to the New Testament there's no freelance faith no solo faith in the New Testament none at all that's why commitment bodily to a particular fellowship in one place of believers is important very important by the way if you're a new student coming to Glasgow don't flit about between churches yes of course look at different churches and see where it is that you feel God is calling you to belong but then belong be part of that body don't go to one church in the morning and another in the evening another one during the week that's anti-Christian anti-the Bible anti-church you're part of a body you're not part of a collection of loose limbs floating around the place like a Damien Hirst sculpture all verse 14 with one accord devoted to prayer together you got it now notice the detail do you see all these and we have the eleven apostles named one by one well that's obvious obviously leaders of the church must be men of prayer committed to prayer devoted to prayer corporate prayer that goes without saying anyone who thinks they can be a leading light in the church without being a leading voice in the corporate prayer of the church just doesn't understand what

Christian leadership is about the church has at the very heart of its activity corporate prayer then leadership in the church of course is leading in that activity make any excuses we like but that's just fact but notice it's not just the apostles is it not just the so-called professionals the leaders if you like not at all verse 14 together with the women first there were many women Luke is very keen on reminding us about the women he's got several in particular that he mentions if you look back to Luke chapter 8 you'll see he talks about Mary Magdalene and Joanna whose husband was the manager of the king's household and Susanna and he tells us that these and others were not just prayers for Jesus ministry they were providers for Jesus ministry they gave money to support it that's often the way too isn't it those who are generous providers tend to be those who are the committed prayers and remember too that these women were those who were at the cross weren't they remember all the men all the disciples had scarpered at the cross it's interesting isn't it that it often tends to be that way in prayer meetings too often meetings for prayer tend to predominate among women the men tend to scarper there as well I haven't actually counted in our own prayer meeting I might on Wednesday though the ratio of men to women but it's very often noticed isn't it in churches that men seem to be very reluctant to lead in corporate prayer I don't know why that is are we lazy I suppose we are are we fearful but the Bible tells us we need to lead in prayer Paul I guess knew that this was something that men needed particularly to be prodded about because in 1st Timothy 2 he makes a point of calling men to pray I desire that in every place he says men should pray first of all but women likewise he adds and of course the women were here at prayer in Acts chapter 1 together that's important they weren't separated off as the Jewish way would have been in a different place a different court of the temple they were together the men and with the apostles all one in Christ Jesus in prayer and notice another detail that we're told here along with well Jesus earthly family very striking isn't it his mother and his brothers gospels tell us that once upon a time they didn't believe in him they thought he was mad and yet here they are with all the others praying to Jesus their erstwhile earthly brother and praying to him as the lord of heaven and earth isn't that staggering quite something isn't it it's rather like the arch skeptic who thought Christians are mad and deluded but now he finds himself with all the other Christians in a prayer meeting and notice they were all together nobody was excluded because of their previous unbelief nobody said ah you used to think

Jesus was mad you of all people who ought to have known who he was you can't come to our prayer meeting and there's a place for every single believer in the church's prayer meeting novices as well as those who've been there for years and years but there's nothing more encouraging is there as as new believers finding their voice to pray among the people of God thrills me more than anything else I think to hear new voices of prayer and they're all there with the apostles and with the others think about think about your skeptical family members you imagine them sitting with you and praying in a meeting to the Lord Jesus Christ well it's not impossible not impossible actually sometimes it's new converts to Christ who drag their family who've been Christians for years along to pray in their new enthusiasm and by the way also just notice here that Jesus mother is with them they're not praying to her are they they're just praying with her to just one of them they don't have any crazy ideas that she's the queen of heaven or anything ridiculous like that so sad isn't it when people think that they think somehow they've got to pray to Mary to reach Jesus oh don't be silly copy Mary do what Mary did pray to God in Jesus name with all his people and your prayers will be heard but just stand back for a minute and think about this scene of all the pictures that we have in the New Testament of the apostolic church the New Testament church the Pentecostal missionary church the first picture is right here and it's the church of prayer corporate prayer together as a body with one voice and committed prayer devoted constant with one focus waiting on the spirit of [ 31 : 54 ] God and expectant trusting in God's promise certain of their mission and call yes certain of the great advance and the activity they need to plan the strategy they need for proclaiming the kingdom but by no means thinking that because of that they don't need to pray no quite the opposite insistent consistent devoted constant in corporate prayer what do you think that Luke the theologian and the preacher is telling us well he's telling us this that just as the church can be certain because of the enthronement of the son of God being real and permanent certain of power so also the church must be constant in prayer together because of the expectation of the spirit of God to be at work in the world and because that expectation is real and permanent and only by acknowledging our dependence on the Lord by his spirit our total dependence on him only thus can he do and will he do things among us that's the only way

God can work in power through his church because that's the only way he can be sure of working and making sure he gets the glory the only way he can be sure of working so as to protect us from ourselves from our tendency to self congratulation to idolatry if that's true and I think it is true let me just end with two important implications for our churches today first is this it's a necessary corrective isn't it for our focus today on methods there's a great focus today on methods on strategy on tactics on training in gospel ministry and there's nothing wrong with that in itself Acts in fact is full of things that we can learn about mission methods and strategy and training all of these things and in fact the overall strategy and the ongoing focus on action is a very great challenge to us it's quite overwhelming in Acts they would receive the spirit for witness it's a reminder to us that we're meant to be active but we mustn't ever get that wrong we must never see the wrong thing here Acts always always teaches us beyond any doubt that it's waiting on God's spirit depending on God's spirit knowing knowing that his work is real it's laying hold on that by committed persevering corporate prayer that is absolutely fundamental to everything in the church's mission without me remember Jesus said you can do nothing not just without me you'll be a bit under par but without me you can do nothing and he's saying that again here and we in the church today especially in the west we need to learn that and relearn it we can be too focused on methods even good methods Christianity explored release the word lunchtime services church planting all sorts of things they're all good but it's still true that without me you can do nothing says Jesus and for Jesus to be at work among us to be at work safely among us needs prayer E.M. Bounds in this wonderful little book Power Through Prayer which I've read I don't know how many times he says this the church is looking for better methods but God is looking for better men and women he goes on and says this what the church needs today is not more machinery or better not new organizations or more and novel methods but men and women whom the Holy Spirit can use people of prayer people mighty in prayer the Holy Spirit doesn't flow through methods but through men he doesn't come on machinery but on people he doesn't anoint plans but people people of prayer now you'll often hear me speaking about vision and strategy and I believe that with all my heart we must always be thinking about the best way to fulfill our calling that always means we have to be thinking and we have to have fresh thinking always but don't ever mishear me those words that I just read I believe to be absolutely fundamental absolutely basic God doesn't anoint plans he anoints people people of prayer that's very important for us as a congregation isn't it we're about to go into a new phase of life back into our refurbished building all sorts of new opportunities will come to us but without prayer committed corporate prayer it's all nothing absolutely nothing I guess I'm speaking as well to those who are preachers or who aspire to be preachers and evangelists and teachers of God's word including myself the end bound says this too preaching that kills is prayerless preaching praying makes the preacher a heart preacher the heart makes the preacher men of great hearts only are great preachers the indefinable in preaching what makes it preaching is heaven's distillation in answer to prayer I need to remember that so I've stuck it on my wall right in front of my desk so I can read it every day but you need to remember it too I can study a lot and so can Edward and Bob and all the other stuff we can sweat a lot we must we do but only prayer your prayers and our prayers only prayer for the spirit of God to be at work in the midst of us together only that will bring the increase of the word growth of the church it's a necessary corrective to our focus to our obsession almost with methods when you're looking for a church what are the things you ask about well it'll be things like this won't it well what programs do you have what do you do for young people what's your worship like by that you probably mean singing but do you ever ask the one question that matters above everything else when do you pray where do you pray how often do you pray how can I join you to pray second it's a necessary corrective for our focus on individuality isn't it individualism is the scourge of our age it's the scourge of our modern church for so many Christians evangelical Christians it's all about me and my faith [ 38 : 40 ] Jesus and me my quiet times and how they're going my fulfilling experience of worship whatever it is you see the same spirit that's wrecking our society is also disembodimenting our church it's not all about me nor is it all about you personally it's all about Jesus the Lord it's all about his body his church he didn't leave a collection of individuals he didn't leave a voluntary society he didn't leave a vague association of like minded people he called around him a church an assembly a family a body one being and that bodily focus that corporate focus is everywhere in the New Testament so much so that I would say in New Testament terms you can't really call yourself a Christian without being joined bodily in reality visibly committed to a body of a visible church a real congregation not a virtual one a real one warrants and all we're going to see next week that even

here the Pentecostal church the book of Acts had plenty of warrants so did every church today well again soon we'll be going back into a bigger building won't we in Buchanan Street it's a very easy building to be very anonymous in to be very individualist to be very consumerist to come along and just consume the service the singing the music the preaching the prayer whatever it is that you like and just disappear again no connection no commitment nothing corporate nothing body like but that's so so far away from everything that the New Testament means by a church that really if that's how you think if that's how you operate then you haven't really been to church at all in the Bible sense of the world the real church the New Testament church the church where Jesus is present by his spirit is a body it's corporate so friends let's be prepared to be prepared to be a Pentecostal church like that we can't expect

Jesus to be at work if we're not be prepared to be shaped by him are we if we want to see Jesus witnessing in the city centre if we want to see people coming to faith and following Jesus if we want to see new congregations planted if we want to see our neighbours our friends our workmates being reached well let us be seen to be by everyone and by God himself to be a church in constant prayer committed prayer devoted and persevering prayer and corporate prayer with one accord all together a true Pentecostal church Luke is telling us must be constant in prayer because our expectancy of the Spirit of God is real and is permanent because Jesus is risen well let's pray together shall we