

Apostolic Foundations (1 of 12)

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the importance of apostolic foundations and the need for believers to confront idolatry in contemporary society.

Duration: 57:15

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 17:26, 1 Thessalonians 2:3

Topics: "Apostolic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker contemplates the opportunity to address a group of worldly men with the wisdom of God. He describes the suffering and persecution faced by the apostles, who remained steadfast in their faith. The speaker emphasizes the importance of relying on God's resurrection power rather than relying on prepared manuscripts. He also highlights the purpose of human existence, which is to seek after God and be found by Him, as stated in the Bible.

Transcript

This is really very special, as the pastor said, and that he gave us twelve times together is not insignificant. Twelve is the apostolic number. Twelve is the foundational number.

The twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve stones that had to be restored in the altar of God. So I love that number, and I love the theme that God has given, and don't think that I've got this all laid out. I'm just proceeding with trembling from session to session, trusting with you for the unfolding of God.

That's how it must be, if indeed this is going to be an apostolic and prophetic occasion. And the first thing that's been quickened to me, before I even get to my text, is to read you a scripture from 1 Thessalonians to raise the whole level of our expectation, seeing that this is an hour of the restoration of all things, before the Lord can be restored who is pent up in the heavens. And it says in 1 Thessalonians 1, verse 13, And for this reason we also constantly thank God, that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

I would almost take the liberty of adding that. Who believe that. It performs a work in you who believe that.

That this is not just man's word, but God's very word. If you have that quality of faith to believe that, this word will work a work in you. And it's by that work, from word to word and work to work, that we ourselves

are shaped by the hearing of a word as event that raises the whole quality and level of our life and brings us ourselves to apostolic stature.

So I'm saying that not just for tonight, but for all these nights. And henceforth, that every time we come into the assembly of God's people, we should come with this expectation, that no matter whether it comes with a Brooklyn accent or something Germanic or Scandinavian or too blue or whatever, it's the word of God, and not the word of men, that performs a work in them who believe that. That's apostolic faith.

That's apostolic believing. And that makes the word into an event. So I'm going to pray with that introduction.

Precious God, how audacious for Paul to say that about himself and his own speaking. How audacious, more so even for us, Lord. And yet, we're emboldened to do it, Lord, because if this is not you, if these are not your days, if you have not appointed them, if you have not chosen the foolishness of this messenger, my God, and this congregation of your saints in their whole nondescript and average constitution and makeup, then what are we about? Lord, we're asking largely, we want God's word, we want events, we want change, we want calling and significant employment of our lives.

So, possess this frame, my God, and bring forth the word as your own word, in content, in tone, in form, in spirit. All together, Lord, let it be your speaking, and we'll thank you and praise you for the remarkable and unique privilege which is ours, to hear it and to receive it. In Jesus' holy name, and for your glory and honor, and God's people said, Amen.

Well, my text tonight is Act 17, Paul at Athens. Am I sounding okay, natural? Yeah, okay. If you were not here for Sunday, I would really recommend that you get the tape, because everything is built on what precedes it, and we go on in this unfolding, and God sounded some themes.

He set the tone, he began to alert us to the resonance and the multifaceted meaning of this glorious word, apostolic, and what ascending is from an apostolic body, what constitutes that, and what are the elements that must take place before God's Spirit speaks into the congregation to say, Separate unto me, Paul and Barnabas, for the work whereinto I have called them. And we're not going to follow them step by step, but as the Lord will direct, this is not the first journey in Act 17, it's another, but it is the result of having been sent, and Paul is actually in flight in Act 17. Those of you who are knowledgeable know that Act 16 saw Paul and Silas in prison, in dungeon, with their feet set fast in stocks and their backs having been torn in strips by 39 strokes of a cat and nine tails, having been dragged to the marketplace for having confounded the powers of the air and having set free a woman who was a piece of merchandise manipulated and used by men.

And so in obedience to the heavenly vision they found themselves suffering already, and there was a remarkable and miraculous release that came through their praise in their darkest hour, maybe we'll take up this text at another time, and then Paul continued on. Outrage, there's strife, there's contention, there's panic, there's hysteria, the authorities go berserk, they say, Those who have turned the world upside down have come here to us also. And as I said in the Sunday speaking, that that's what distinguishes apostolic ministry from every other.

It needs be only two men, but they need the scent of God in the moment of his timing, prepared and having been brought to stature, that distinguishes that from the proliferation of ministries that are everywhere about us today hardly causing a beep or an echo. Because two men so scents will turn the

world upside down. And so picking up in chapter 17, Paul in flight having passed from Thessalonica and into Berea, where he received somewhat better and more cordial reception, and still he was pursued and hunted.

And in verse 14, Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away to go to the sea, but both Silas and Timothy remained there. So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens, and receiving the command for Silas and Timothy to come to him, with all speed they departed. Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw the city wholly given over to idols.

Therefore, and I'm just quoting the King James, I'm reading another edition, I like the King James better. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the Gentile worshippers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there, quote and unquote, who happened to be there. Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him, and some said, What does this babblers want to say? Others said, He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods, because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

And they took him and brought him to the area of Pegas, saying, May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean. For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time and nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

Then Paul stood in the midst of the area of Pegas and said, let's pause right there. As if this were some kind of chance occasion and just a kind of stumbling about and some circumstantial thing by which Paul found himself in a location which he had not intended to visit. But I want you to understand that this is every much in the intention of God as Berea, as Thessalonica, as Philippi, and as any other place where Paul goes.

Whether he goes because he sees a vision at night of a Macedonian beseeching him, a direct and explicit operation of the Spirit of God, or he goes circumstantially in flight, being taken even by other men. And I want to say that I'm not presuming either upon God or upon Paul. If he were here he would say amen.

Because for such a man and such a mentality and such an apostolic consciousness and perception, nothing is by chance. Nothing is happenstance. Everything is the ordination of a sovereign God who attends to every detail.

And if God has not one means to get his man to the explicit and the appointed place, he has yet another. Therefore, nothing is accident, nothing is wasted, and nothing is out of its time. I want to ask you tonight, and I'll be asking you continually for twelve weeks, is that your consciousness also? Do you have that abiding sense of the sovereignty of God that if you miss a plane or some undue and untoward thing takes place that we're not to chide or be chafed in our spirits or murmur under our breath, but to rejoice for the inadvertent thing that God will turn to his glory? And if I were not so conscious of the time, I would give you illustration after illustration of missing planes, of coming a week early to a wedding nonsensically, only to find that I'm there for some purpose other than a wedding, and so on.

And even the circumstances that have to do with my being here now is exactly of that kind. Going back to the occasion when I had a headache, working on a critique, a book report for a seminary requirement that was mounting, and then being asked that same night, as it just happened to be the night that the elders and wives were meeting from this church, why don't you share what it is that you're working on? And so I

came with my head just aching, and this is not ordinary for me. In fact, when the time came to share on what I felt was such a subversive theological piece, so universalistic in its whole spirit and temper, so seductive and vile, all the more because of its subtlety, I could barely bring my thoughts together.

My head was virtually coming off my shoulders, and these precious elders and wives of this congregation had to surround me and pray for me and deliver me from the affliction that came from this intellectual and spiritual exercise. And then I shared. And that sharing evidently was so impressive that the tape got to your pastor, and then I was invited to share to the combined seminary school classes, and one chance comment out of that sharing triggered these days.

We need to put on another mindset and not see ourselves as victims of circumstance, even when it's ungainly or unpleasant. It's not pleasant to be in flight from persecution, and yet it's the very thing that God employed to bring His apostolic man to the appointed place and in the appointed time. Can you imagine Paul having written letters in advance to the four gospel businessmen in Athens to say that, I think that around such and such a time I hope to be in your area.

I'm a fairly well-known conference speaker, and if you should have an occasion to employ me, unheard of. He never lifted a finger in his own behalf or in the promotion of his own ministry, and yet God had him in the right place and in the right time. And I don't have a word tonight.

You need to really perceive this by the spirit, what it means to stand in the midst of these philosophers at Mars Hill. And it's not because I'm artistic or literary that I want to underline this, but because it is the chief place. It is the critical juncture of time and place for God's men facing everything which is opposed and calculated to be against the wisdom of God.

And that these men, though they are not Elymas, the sorcerer that we spoke of Sunday, are every bit as much a representative of the kingdom of darkness and of the powers of the air as he. Though they're called the philosophical gob and speak another kind of wisdom that doesn't seem to be as alarming, yet is it in its nature every bit as antithetical and opposed to the kingdom of God and the purposes of God as the witchcraft and as the sorcerer. Paul is always in the place of confrontation and encounter.

This is the epitome of the world's wisdom, the Epicureans and the Stoics. This is Athens. This is the seat of humanism.

This is everything indeed that the world yet continues to celebrate. And maybe the vocabulary has been changed and we don't use the word Epicurean and Stoic, yet if I had the ability and the time, I think I could make a case that every present day philosophy and mindset that talks about if it feels good, do it and do your own thing and however it's so expressed will find a direct linkage to the philosophies of that day. In a word, nothing has changed.

And in fact what we need to see is that we ourselves are on collision course. That God is preparing us as an apostolic body for our encounter on the Mars hill of our own generation. And that indeed such an encounter needs come.

And it would have perhaps already have come if God could have found some corporate entity that could be to the spirit of this age where Paul was to the adversaries of God in his own. We need to recognize that we're called to confrontation and to encounter and that we're on collision course. And that when we come to the requisite maturity and apostolic stature and ability in God and fearlessness already having occasion

persecution by the very character and content of our life and this expression we'll find ourselves also being brought to such a place.

Are you following me? Okay. Then Paul stood in the midst what man could not have obtained by his own arrangement had he stood himself on his head and had he written letters and made every kind of advance preparation God provided in his own artless way by the men who brought him. I want to bring you right to the the point of uttermost significance in the anatomy of an apostolic events.

The point of inception. It says while Paul waited for them at Athens he didn't think he was there for anything in particular he was buying his time waiting for his colleagues to catch up with him whom he commanded it says in verse 15 to be brought to him. How do you like that kind of authority? And yet it's not offensive.

And while he waited for them at Athens his spirit was provoked within him I think the King James says his spirit was grieved as he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Here's the point of the inception of an apostolic event. While he waited he saw this is a man with his eyes open this isn't one of these faint super spiritual types that trips on eggshells and is so ethereal that a gust of wind can blow them away.

This is full orbed apostolic man and as we'll read later who even quotes the Greek poets and says that even as your own poets have said that here's a man who is familiar with the philosophies the poetry, the whole tenor of the age in which he is serving God. He saw the city wholly given to idolatry. You say well Art that's Athens, that's Greece that's a pagan center of the ancient world but St. Paul is something other it's not other at all it's just as much given to idolatry as Athens was only we have not the eye to see it as Paul did we have not an apostolic seeing and we still naively think that idolatry has something to do only with pagan altars and shrines and icons and objects and things of that kind.

You need to understand in essence what the whole idolatrous thing is that permeates the spirit of our age and has permeated the earth since the fall of man. And why does it say and therefore disputed he in the synagogues with the Jews. What has that to do with seeing the city wholly given over to idolatry? Everything.

Therefore seeing the city wholly given over to idolatry therefore disputed he in the synagogues with the Jews. Why? Because the synagogue is rampant with idolatrous substitution for the true worship of God. And lest something rise up of an anti-Semitic kind in which you cluck your tongue knowingly about the synagogues of the Jews I mean also the synagogues of the Gentiles.

I mean any religious establishment that offers to men a religion of convenience a cheap dollar in the collection plate kind of Sunday or Friday night religion that requires nothing in terms of true relationship or service to the Most High God. That gives men a modicum of psychic and emotional satisfaction that produces something ethereal through the combination of organs and stained glass windows and amplifiers or by whatever means. And lest them feel that they have done their Sunday thing and are now free for the golf course or the football game.

That's idolatry in its very heart. And when we shall have ourselves an apostolic heart what is the nature of that? One that continually pounds with a jealousy for the glory of God and cannot stand to see something that competes for the attention of men calling itself worship and is not. And if you don't think that this kind of idolatry can even be practiced invoking the name of Jesus then you're naive indeed.

We need to see apostolically if we're going to be employed apostolically. I believe that if Paul was not grieved in his spirit there would not have been the events that I have so few minutes to describe tonight and may have to spill over into next week. Paul being grieved in the spirit.

I love that phrase. And this is not some petulance. This isn't some kind of man who's personally offended or something has offended his Jewish or his aesthetic or religious sensibility.

He's offended because he's an apostle. He's offended because of the jealousy for the love of God and the knowledge of Him and because he knows that those who have been seduced by an idolatrous substitute are doomed. He cannot stand it.

And when God finds such a man you can believe he's going to be brought to the place of confrontation. He's not going to be leaving Athens clucking his tongue and praying a ceremonial prayer hoping for some betterment of their condition. He's going to find himself right in the moor right in the thick right in the juncture of this filthy and vile wisdom that purports to be religious and is not.

And they brought him. What will this babbler say? I think that the technical translation of babbler is rogue picker. Some kind of Jewish I don't know what oddity some threadbare thing that floated in and we know that the Greeks had a traditional contempt for Jews anyway in the superiority of their own civilization and the unfathomable mystery of this monotheistic people.

So what was this Hebrew to them? He had no impressive credential. He was of the offscourings of the world and that's all the more reason why he's to be employed to confound that which is considered to be wise and esteemed of men. If you don't have this sense of God's delight in pitting his wisdom against the wisdom of this world and choosing the thing that's foolish and weak to confound the thing that is wise and mighty you have no understanding of why I'm here tonight.

I really am a pathetic piece of disjuncture and crumpled condition almost always. And I think that we need to prepare ourselves that that is going to be our essential configuration particularly in the moments of confrontation. It's not when you're all revved up and resonating resonating with the power of God because you've been in the congregation of God's people and you've been singing his choruses gloriously.

It's when you feel terribly alone and absolutely isolated and weak and in a strange place and feeling strange yourself and your tongue cleaves to the roof of your mouth and it's like ashes. There you have to confound those who are wise. The philosophers.

I had to pick out the two volumes from the Encyclopedia Britannica where I'm staying to look up Epicurean and Stoics and my God, it ran for pages. Sophistry itself is a Greek word meaning a play on wisdom that is has not really to do with a quest for truth but just something celebrated for its own sake that gives the appearance of the love of truth. Paul was meeting something head on and that spirit prevails in the world today and prevails also in the religious world and when God confronts it he's going to confront it apostolically which is to say foolishly Paul stood in the midst and said and we ought to pause and say hey, put your hand over the rest of the text, don't read it.

What would you say? What would you say if you were given a once and for all sublime opportunity to be in the chief place and to have the ear and the attention of these men who abound in the wisdom of the world and to penetrate with the wisdom of God what would you say? God has a plan for your life. I ought to be respectful, there might be a time when that kind of statement would be appropriate. There might be.

But what we need to really understand and to appreciate the moment the more and the man the more and the operation of the spirit the more the spirit of the resurrection, life and power of God moving through the an individual who has voided himself of his own Jewish wisdom who was the prized student of the Rabbi Gamaliel who had Jewish credentials in his own right that would shame the totality of our seminary professors together and counted all that done that he might win Christ and when he stands in the perilous and exacting moment in which wisdom will he speak?

I can just tell you from my own much briefer less full experience that choice will always be before you whether to condescend to the thing that is trustworthy experienced you've trotted it out before, it works you'll be saved at least utter embarrassment there won't be an absolute failure but neither will there be a glory just as I have to hear in the daily chapel services at the seminary my dear professor speaking about faith and everyone reading his sermon I'll believe them about faith when they come before the congregation of faculty and students without a prepared manuscript and speak out of their hearts by the spirit of God according to the word that indeed they can speak of faith but they're afraid to die you say what are you talking about, no one's going to shoot them listen that's

the easy way to go the real dying is to remain and to turn beet red and feel the sweat trickle down your brow and trust that the floor will open and swallow you when you're standing before eight or nine hundred people and begin to hem and horn and jerk and stutter and stagger and can't find your tongue and forgot what you were going to say and what your illustration was and even the scripture disappears from the page much safer to come prepared with a manuscript that you've read and read and prepared and even spoke to in a mirror to get the right resonance of voice and articulation and gesture than to stand there like some well begun thing trusting the resurrection life of God to find expression to your personality as if it's a once and for all thing and eternity is at stake and it's not

just a chapel service, are you guys taking notes if you think it's just a chapel service you have disqualified yourself from being apostolic what do you mean just will you call tonight just a bible study, it's just there's no such thing in the apostolic lexicon everything is an eternal moment fraught with significance and I'll tell you if we believe that there will never be a dull moment in our lives and God intended us to believe it and so to live, come on cats you're giving to exaggeration I see you have a hyperbolic flare you mean a chapel service is a once and for all eternal moment or a bible study time come on guys because if you could see as God sees only He knows what is being transacted in an hour like this what is going into the spirits of men, what kind of release what call of

God how many times have people come up to me afterwards and said Ot, while you were speaking not even the word while you were speaking, the spirit of God said if we don't believe that God's word is an event we'll get what we don't believe I want God wants to see our whole expectancy lifted He wants us to live as a people who believe that every moment is appointed of God and that it's wrought for eternal consequence you say but Ot but Ot, who's sufficient for these things oh hallelujah how long has God been waiting for you Lutherans to ask it now you know why Paul breathed it continually who's sufficient for these things who's sufficient for 12 weeks with a church at a crossroad and his whole destiny and future is at stake and the tapes are going to go far and wide beyond this church and

into the nation and the world, who's sufficient for these things who's sufficient to stand in the midst of Mars Hill in a once and for all perhaps never to be again given opportunity if you're not trembling and if you're not saying who's sufficient for these things neither are you apostolic if you've been celebrating Paul you sap because he's Jewish because you think that automatically is a synonym for boldness and that

somehow this is an explication of some innate ethnic racial quality you've missed it this is a beggar and a rag picker a babbler but he babbles the things that are given by the spirit of God in the appointed moment and nothing else how would you have begun you know how Paul began I perceive that in all things you're quite superstitious WAP hey listen I used to be an

intellectual, Berkeley grad you want to get an intellectual philosophical type mad tell him that he's superstitious whew what an indignity that's how Paul began with an insult I'll tell you he would flunk out of probably every present day evangelical training school for missionaries but I'll tell you he arrested their attention what will this babbler say he'll tell you I perceive in all things you're too superstitious too religious in the wrong way I think the Amplified says very reverent to demons I'll tell you something about going up to Mars Hill you're never assured you're going to come down hey let's not forget that there are mountains that men like Paul have ascended from which they have not returned you can't go up and confront the wisdom of this world with that kind of audacity

and boldness and be assured that men are going to let you go and you know what Paul thought about that nothing nothing he was without fear he was without concern for his own life he did not take into consideration what would be the consequence of his words for himself how would you like to see pastors, ministers and teachers like that you've got one but I'll tell you 99% of other places they do take their words into consideration and think how is this going to affect them how will they receive this will they misunderstand me will they withdraw their ties will they seek another place don't you love a man who speaks what God gives him without any concern for the consequence as pertaining to himself that's apostolic how are you coming shall we take a 1 through 10 scale and say how are you

registering on that I'll tell you about 8, 9 or do you tremble does your lip quiver if someone looks at you the wrong way misunderstands you, raises an eyebrow this hey if we're not going to make it in the ordinary intercourse among ourselves as believers if we're fearful of each other and we're walking in a guarded way and calculating what we shall say so as not to offend or be misunderstood or be misperceived how shall we be a mouth for God in a confrontation with a hostile world the thing that has kept you from apostolicity is your Scandinavian looseness your concern to be nice you've mediated your own life you've determined what is appropriate how dare you there's only one who has that right there's only one wisdom that can determine what is appropriate in any moment it's the most

high and no other you say oh I believe that but I don't have the faith to believe that he'll mediate it for me in appointed moments oh you little faith what do you mean little moments hey I'll meet you outside after the service little moments that's like saying just the bible study what is little apostolically speaking small talk unheard of in the kingdom of God our conversation ought to be resonant with the life of God our quote small talk is life giving we ought to be instant in season and out to reprove to correct, to exhort, to rebuke if necessary and to have it received by others as very love itself preach the word, speak the word Paul said to Timothy he wasn't talking about Sunday services he was talking about facing the things and speaking to them the things that are needful

whether it's an exhortation or a rebuke and we've become so spoiled to think that speaking is a sermon that will be biblically sound and general and not pointed at us that we would get offended and bent out of shape if someone spoke to us a direct and corrective word guys we've got a long way to go to prepare ourselves for Mars Hill and where is the place of preparation but the congregation of the saints itself if we're walking on eggshells here if we're pusillanimous here and fearful here and intimidating each other here what shall we be then in the place of confrontation in the world for which we have been called I

perceive in all things you're too superstitious for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship I even found an altar with this inscription to the

unknown God you can believe that if it's an object it can't be worship isn't that right it's incongruous, it's a contradiction of terms you can't worship an object don't you think Paul knew that don't you think that there's a sarcasm something sardonic there's an irony in his statement as I observed your objects of worship he's already needling them and giving them a jab in the kishkas so to oh you understand that good he's only setting them up for the one two therefore the one whom you worship without knowing him I proclaim to you I don't like that translation so much whom you therefore ignorantly worship him or he I proclaim unto you doesn't that sound arrogant telling these men that they are worshipping ignorantly I proclaim unto you it's a man acting in his competence and in his

expertise it's like the letter that I wrote to that head of the American consulate in Zimbabwe in Africa who told me that, called me at five o'clock and I'm running long distance that he could not approve the visa applications of two Africans one black and one white who wanted to come to our prophetic school in Minnesota and for no good reason other than he felt suspicious and after he hung up the Lord began to stir my heart to realize that this man is exceeding his official right and I wrote him a letter I said sir I'm required to speak to you out of my own competence because I wouldn't expect you to understand that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof and the nations and those that dwell in them and therefore God has established government for the governance of the nations

and for order but you have exceeded God's limitation you have gone from being an official to being officious they got their visa not without outrage and shrieks and howls but something had to be brought to the attention of a man in the authority and the competence that is ours as the church him whom you ignorantly worship I declare unto you not only in word but Paul is the thing incarnate he's the thing in itself or in himself his very being his boldness the word that comes from him that is extemporaneous the uncalculated statement the insult the cleverness the incisiveness is itself a demonstration of the God whom they ignorantly worship and you know what we need to know not only do they worship him ignorantly but willingly ignorantly willfully ignorantly it's not an accident they choose

to worship a God who is unknown you say why is that because an unknown God makes no requirement at all no demands he's just an abstraction if he's anything and a God who is abstract does not speak does not require don't you think Paul saw through this whole cop-out thing this thing that sounds at its face value to be so spiritual monuments with inscriptions to the unknown God this obsequious deference excuse the language to spiritual reality which is a phony and a smoke screen a fog that saves men from any excruciating demand of being in relationship with the God who is they prefer that he remains unknown but Paul is not going to allow them that luxury will you some commentator wrote they were willing to leave open a place for the unknown but this unknown must be thought of as the utterly

unknowable and indeterminate doesn't that sound so spiritual God is so magnificent and so distant who can know is some remote power higher powers I've heard rabbis say that sounds like lofty ethereal and spiritual language and maybe it impresses some but it didn't impress Paul at all he saw piercingly right through the subterfuge of men who love to celebrate an unknown God and to keep him unknown it's a metaphysical sham and then how so what is the implication if these are philosophers who celebrate ethics being stoics and epicureans when their whole stance and their whole posture toward the ultimate question of reality which is God himself is phony, feigned and cop out where is their ethics then you know the famous line from Shakespeare excuse me these illusions where he's watching the

ditch digger and he comes up with the skull of the old court jester Yorick and he holds the skull in his hand this hamlet who has just returned from university whose father had been killed and he feels the weight of it and he remembers how I sat on your knee but now alack and alas where be your jibes and your gambles now where are your jokes now where are your hot shot puns now you dead skull you know what Paul might have said to these philosophers where is your ethics now where is your self celebration as being intellectuals who have an ethical standard when this thing reveals how phony you are and deceitful in an unwillingness even to know a God who desires to be known and yet to celebrate that myth, that subterfuge that sham by inscribing monuments to the unknown God you've been found

out and revealed by my coming this God whom you ignorantly thought to worship him I declare unto you and I'll bet by that time if they could they would stick their fingers in their ears and run for their lives because they did not want to hear I'll tell you what there's not one of them who was there that day in Mars Hill who heard this rag picker who shall ever stand before God with excuse and so must it also be for us who are an apostolic people called among other things to confrontation at the end of the age as those to whom God brings us as events as the thing in itself as the reality of the very God from whom people flee in their cop-out desires to avoid the implication of true faith and true commitment will no longer stand with excuse because they have met us they've had an apostolic

encounter and they are forever without excuse, that's more than four spiritual laws, forgive my coming back to this the whole thing is the man in himself him I declare unto you that's either presumption or arrogance or it's just simple statement of fact of one who knows him in great intimacy and can make him known I don't think God was offended at all by Paul's declaration and he won't be by ours either the God who made the world and all things in it since he is Lord of Heaven and Earth does not dwell in temples made with hands neither is he served by human hands as though he needed anything since he himself gives to all life and breath and all things and made from one blood every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth having determined their appointed times and the bounds of

their habitation that they should seek God if perhaps they might look for him and find him though he is not far from each one of us Lord forgive me for rushing that that sublime statement it will take weeks to go word by word over what has just poured out of Paul's impassioned soul without preparation without advanced calculation it is just a gush of his own knowledge of what this whole existence is about that in one fell swoop moment tells philosophers who do nothing but seek to hear some new thing their whole lives long in idle babbling and seeking knowledge and never coming to the knowledge of the truth what the whole purpose of human existence is can you tell me now that we've quoted it? to seek after God if happily we might be found of him and for that reason he made of one blood all

men and established the bounds of their habitations what a colossal view how absolute is he trying to say that the whole of creation and the political world and nations and races and the formation of men themselves and their life in earth, their temporal life is for one reason only exactly to seek God if happily you may be found of him, hey how many of you guys are saying, how medieval that sounds like the middle ages, how monolithic, how simplistic how singular, how absolute as if the whole purpose of our being is one thing, to seek God and to be found of him, as if you know why we're not saying it? because we really do not believe it let's say this we don't believe it as much as Paul believed it, they're saying and saying, I have a feeling that when Paul said it something shook to the

foundations of these philosophical cop-outs, in one moment of time they heard from a man who had no qualification or credential from their intellectual point of view what the whole purpose of this existence is,

and it wasn't offered as an opinion it was offered as a conviction you say, what's the difference Art, the difference is that men have no obligation to hear our opinions but they shall be held eternally responsible for our convictions what's the difference Art, the difference is that an opinion costs you nothing, but a conviction can cost you your life do you really believe that the whole purpose of our being is to find God, to be found of Him and if you believe it, how come you're not living as if you believe it how come then you're spending all of this inordinate amount of time

and energy and money for other things that have not to do with this principle thing, that gives the world the appearance that even we who believe, do not believe that the foundational purpose for our human existence is to know God, we can't say to philosophers what is more than what is true of our life, really true, apostolically true and unless we're willing to go up to a mountain and die at the hands of men whom we're outraging because we have given them no exit and no out, because they know that they shall be eternally accountable for the words that they've heard from our babbling mouth then we have no right to speak it and God in fact will never summon us up there, if we're going to the apostolic we've got some very basic things to consider and with which to make our peace that we

agree with Paul that the purpose of existence of this whole complex, manifold civilization and world it's history it's out poured blood, it's fortunes that have been dispensed, it's technology it's accoutrements, it's architecture it's institutions are only secondary things to provide sufficient stability and order for life, that men might seek after God, if happily they might be fond of Him to believe that, and to live as if we believe that, is apostolic the God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of Heaven and Earth doesn't that sound like just an innocuous statement, if He's the Lord if He's not only the God who made all things and the Heaven and the Earth but He's the Lord of it what's the implication for those who live in a piece of Earth called Athens because

people don't mind talking about God, and having some kind of acknowledgement of even God as Creator, and it gives them a lustrous appearance of a seeming spirituality but Paul will not allow them to get by with that only the God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord, not only of Heaven with which you can still breathe easily, but of Earth where you dwell you can't get by with vague acknowledgements of God as Creator and be exempt from the implication of Himself as Lord of the place where you dwell and of you yourself unto us this day is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord so you can believe I'm not doing justice to this text this is so charged, every utterance, every word of Paul is so resonant with meaning, with confrontation, with piercing the word of truth right through

the subterfuge and the defenses and justifications of men, it's uncanny no man could have planned it no brilliance of man could have spoken it extemporaneously only the God who is the Lord of Heaven and Earth could have formed these words and expressed them through a man's mouth in the critical moments and I want to tell you that that God is with us still I brought a copy of the Encyclopedia Britannica just to show you, I mean this is astonishing talking about the Stoics the classical people, Greeks, Romans thank you, five minutes loved rhetoric it was one of the disciplines required of any educated person we forgot in fact that it was required of us and in the Encyclopedia we read in rhetoric the Stoics recognized three kinds of speeches, deliberative, forensic and panegerical they held

that the ideal speech had four parts, the introduction statement of the case, refutation of opponents, and the peroration, which means the summing up and the concluding the Stoics followed Theophrastus in regarding as criteria of excellence the use of pure Greek style, clarity appropriateness and constructive reasoning and to this they added a fifth criterion conciseness you know what I thought when I read that?

boy they sure got their money's worth in Paul he out rhetoriced them all he gave them conciseness he gave them excellence of speech he gave them style, clarity, appropriateness constructive reasoning he took apart the arguments of the opponents before they could open their mouths you who who ignorantly worship I perceive in all things you're too superstitious bang, this is

extraordinary, this is apostolic this is Paul called to be the foundation of the church and God wants a church like him I want to leave you tonight panting and hanging on the ropes and I didn't get one third through the text not with the sense of despair like wow, I mean who can attain to this but the sense of who is sufficient for these things with the kind of trembling which Paul himself also knew this wasn't some kind of hot shot firebrand who had it all together and was instant in season and out out of his own natural resources if he was instant it's because there's a God who was in him who was always appropriate always concise always excellent all that's wanting is for people who avoid themselves from having another alternative that enables them to get by their own wisdom their own

speech, their own reasoning the use of scripture they think appropriate who have not come to that apostolic place of trembling and tension that place of priesthood of waiting, that expectancy that believes that God is more concerned for the eternal nature of that encounter than you and that his word will come and his wisdom will be expressed with the unction and the authority that is requisite for the moment and if it will not to prefer to perish either physically or with humiliation and embarrassment for failure than to attempt some lesser human and religious acceptable thing may God save us from that and open us to the thing that is glorious and eternal, that which is apostolic by his spirit in Jesus name precious God, encourage that faith I pray convict us where we need convicting

Lord, show us how shabby and casual has been the character of our daily living that we have not thought that ordinary moments were eternal in their potential and consequence as if we could handle it at our own cleverness make our own determinations of what we thought appropriate little wonder that we have not been brought to the places of ultimate confrontation who do not ourselves deeply believe and live as if we believe that the whole purpose of existence is to be found of God Lord, put these things in our hearts and spirits let this speaking tonight be an event, may we take hold of it may we desire it may you trouble us in the night hours my God may you set before us a whole set of priorities and considerations that were different from what we understood may eternity burn in our hearts

that you might use us my God to confront so as to save and we'll thank you and praise you for this high calling in Christ Jesus and God's people said Amen

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