

Apostolic Foundations (10 of 12)

by Art Katz

The Church's relationship with Israel is critical to fulfilling God's intention for both the Church and Israel, and requires a quality of spirituality and depth of sanctification to provoke the Jewish people to jealousy.

Duration: 57:47

Topics: "Apostolic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of understanding and addressing the relationship between Christians and Jews. He highlights the challenges and fears that come with preaching the gospel to Jewish individuals who may have deep-rooted skepticism or resistance. The speaker emphasizes that despite the negative actions and behaviors of some Jews throughout history, God's grace will ultimately bring them back to their calling as a light unto the world. He also shares a personal experience of reconciliation and forgiveness between Gentile and Jewish believers, highlighting the need for repentance and unity among Christians and Jews.

Transcript

It's the subject of Israel and the Church. And I'm speaking of it tonight, not just as another ethnic group that needs the evangelization of the Church, but of a very particular mystery of God, in which the Church and Israel are inextricably joined. And I trust that before I'm finished you'll be aware that this is a critical subject, that there's no way for the Church to come into the stature and intention of God, the fullness that God intends for it, independent of its relationship with Israel and with the Jewish people.

Likewise, there's no way that Israel can come into God's intention for it, independent of the Church. In a word, we are locked in with each other. God in his genius has established something.

It's a mystery. It has bewildered many. And it's something that's going to be increasingly prominent as we move deeper to the very end of the age.

And we're going to see how interfused and interrelated we are with this Jewish people and with this nation Israel. So this is not just another subject or a curiosity or talking about ministry to the Jewish people as you would talk about ministry to Puerto Ricans or blacks or anyone else, as if they are another ethnic group. This is much more significant and ought to be part and parcel of our entire apostolic consciousness.

And it's a subject that has not been familiar to the Church in the sense that I'm going to present it tonight. And I'm going to ask God's blessing now because it's going to take another divine assist. So precious God, we look to you now.

We bow before you. The God whose eye has always been set upon this people. They have been the apple of your eye, my God, and a source of heartache and distress and grief for you and a perplexity also to the Church.

And yet we know and we sense that there are extraordinary things that you intend for them not yet fulfilled and cannot be fulfilled without our coming in to the part that you have elected for us to play toward them and they toward us. And Lord, I ask for divine grace tonight of such a kind to just form this and bring it forth, precious God, in the way that only you can because the subject is so dear to you and many-sided and complex. Breathe upon it now by your Spirit.

Give us healing ears. Put aside, Lord, our misconceptions, our stereotypes, our biases, our prejudices, whatever else, even our sentimentalities. Remove that we might have the pure spirit burden of God and come in to your intention for us.

And we'll thank you and praise you for that. In Jesus' holy name, God's people say amen. Okay, the text is Romans 9 through 11, three great chapters.

And it's remarkable when you turn to some of the commentators, even those who have written complete commentaries on Romans, like Carl Bott, how disappointed you are, how little they have to say. In fact, the one, the theologian that I mentioned, virtually had nothing to say about actual Israel. His book was written in 1918.

No one at that time even so much as imagined that that forsaken land called Palestine would one day again become a national homeland for the Jewish people. So he took the occasion to use Romans 9 through 11 as a springboard to speak about the church, the spiritual Israel of God. He spiritualized all of the references that Paul makes to natural Israel.

And the church has essentially been guilty of that throughout all the ages, none less than Luther himself had so little hope for the restoration of Israel that he also tended to read the references to Israel as somehow being oblique references to the church and not to Israel itself. But history and recent events have given us another turning and another opportunity to reconsider. And now we're seeing much more commentary that takes literally and seriously the promises of God to Israel not yet fulfilled.

So Israel is to the church an ultimate challenge and a consummation of God's purposes. It's only in response to the mandate of the church toward Israel that this completion is obtained. And to understand that, I want you to look at chapter 11 and the 11th verse.

Paul raises a question. I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not. But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

So I'm asking you to consider tonight the subject of salvation in the sense in which we rarely, if ever, consider it. That is to say, not in terms of ourselves, not in terms of the benefits that have accrued to us, but in terms of the purposes that accrue to God. There are purposes for our salvation that have not to do with us but have everything to do with him in the fulfillment of his purposes and his mystery and not the least of this is to Israel.

So let's read this again. Have they stumbled that they should fall? Is God finished with them? That's what the church has historically believed in what has come to be called Christian triumphalism. That Israel is defunct.

God's grace has been withdrawn. They're under judgment. Jerusalem and the temple have been destroyed.

They have been scattered over the face of the earth. The church has inherited all of the promises pertaining to natural Israel. Paul makes quick and clear that this is not so.

They've stumbled, but not that they should fall, not that they should be permanently down and out, altogether disqualified once and for all from the purposes of God. Certainly not. But through their fall, this temporary lapse, if we can say so, 2,000 years old, certain purposes have been fulfilled, not the least of which is the salvation that has come to the Gentiles.

Because through their unbelief and through their rejection, Jesus himself became the object of their wrath and he was crucified. But through that very crucifixion, atonement has come to all mankind. So here, even in their error, even in their fallenness, even in their blindness, even in misconstruing and misunderstanding Jesus, not realizing that he is the intended Messiah, and even being the instruments of provocation that brought him to the cross, by that, even in their fall, salvation has come to mankind.

Salvation has come to the Gentiles, but not only as something to be enjoyed unto themselves and for themselves, but also so as to provoke them to jealousy. Dum-da-dum-dum. I'm not giving you a dum-da-dum-dum in some weeks.

This is it. Don't let this thing pass as some kind of Pauline poetry, some kind of a Fulgen statement of Paul. He means it literally every syllable.

There's a mystery that God has reserved for the end of the age, that these two peoples who have been in historic enmity, in clash and opposition and jealousy and suspicion and fear, that even to this day we don't quite yet trust each other, all the more compounded by the recent Holocaust, which many Jewish interpreters have concluded is the final evidence of the failure of Christendom, something that they have known all along because they have been on the receiving end of what they have called Christian persecution, Christian prejudice. They've been victims in Christian lands, and of course any Gentile nation is a Christian nation because they have not seen the distinction between that which is nominally Christian and that which is born again by the Spirit of God. So to my Jewish mother, Hitler was a Christian.

Germany was Christian Germany, and so Poland, and so the whole thing is all blurred and taken together to compound and to deepen the historic enmity between the Gentile and the Jew, between the synagogue and the church. In a word, we don't have a simple task. We have an extraordinary task and a mandate, a commission, and if we shrink from it, if we refuse to consider it, we will have lost the only incentive that God intends for us to bring us to full stature.

Nothing else can provoke us and serve for us as a challenge to bring us to the constitution of true church in all of its apostolic wonder, stature, and power than the provocation to move the Jews to jealousy. Now I don't know how familiar you are with Jews. If I'm the only one that you've ever seen, you can come up after the message man and pinch me.

But I can just tell you from my own past experience and my knowledge of my own people, and I think that it's generally understood, there's a contempt or a disdain by which Jews hold Gentiles. You've not been that commendable in their sight. They're not impressed with your track record.

They're not impressed with your Christian religion, which has hardly caused them to look up. They have not seen anything notable or conspicuous that should in any way command their attention. What they've seen is really, in fact, something less than what they have appreciated in their own Judaism and in the quality of their own Jewish culture and civilization.

In fact, it's only being whispered now, but if you have an ear that's tuned, you'll hear increasingly that really what the hope of mankind is is not a defunct Christendom, which has shown its failure in the Holocaust and its present and continuing perplexities, but Jewish civilization may be that hope. Jewish morality and ethical sensitivity and humaneness and culture, the depth and the breadth of it may be the actual hope. So I'm only saying that to raise the question, what can we imagine must be the condition of the church that will move this people who have been historically at enmity with Gentiles and the church and who look down their long noses upon the Gentile as being somehow intellectually and culturally and even religiously inferior that could conceivably move them to jealousy.

Whatever that thing is, and I'm not in a position tonight even to define it or even to suggest what it is, is also the same thing that will enable us to rule and reign with Christ eternally. It's also the same thing that will help us to unseat the principalities and the powers of the air. If the whole thing comes together, whatever that maturity is, whatever that stature is, whatever that significance in our true corporateness is that will move them to jealousy, will in the very same fell swoop moment also stand for the other needs to which God calls the church and the fulfillment of the eternal purpose of the church to demonstrate to the principalities and powers of the air the manifold wisdom of God.

Whenever we'll be doing that, we'll also be moving the Jews to jealousy. But here's the catch. Except that we consciously take it upon ourselves to move to such a place, to come to such a place as to move them to jealousy, I'm not hopeful that the other things are going to be fulfilled either.

And the church has so far failed in acknowledging that mandate. It somehow has passed it by. Though the word is clear, there's been as much a veil over the site of the traditional church with regard to its obligation toward the Jew as much as there's been a veil over the Jew with regard to the gospel.

But the scripture says, but when their heart is turned to the Lord, that veil is removed. And when our heart is turned to the Lord, this veil over our site will be removed and we'll recognize that indeed we have a most remarkable calling to a most difficult people. It's easier to evangelize in darkest Africa or behind the Iron Curtain or with drug addicts or you name it than this stubborn and resistant, proud, defiant people.

Paul says they are enemies of the gospel for your sake. And he's not just a wolfing. If you read the history of the church, they have been truly enemies.

They've not just sat on their hands and looked by blithely and watched the church do its thing. They have been active in their interference and in their opposition. They have been principal participants in even the martyrdom of many of the saints.

If you read the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, one of the early church fathers who was burned at the stake, it says that the Jews were among the first to seek out the combustible materials. And the

commentator says, and this they do always. They took relish, it seems, in the persecution of the saints.

And what shall we say of even the Jews who were believers, their own kinsmen, Stephen, James and other Jewish martyrs. The Bar Kokhba revolt in 132 AD against Rome, which was the final failure, even after the destruction of the temple in which the Jewish believers in Israel could not participate because Kokhba, this general, was touted by Rabbi Atiba as being the Messiah. How could a Jewish believer consent to that, let alone participate in rebellion? And so there were occasions when the forces directed by this general persecuted and slowed even Jewish believers.

They are enemies of the gospel. And if I had time and the ability, I could indicate that there's a degree to which still there's active opposition to the gospel. So what do we do with enemies? How do we relate to enemies? How do we regard enemies? Everything that is natural in us tends to react in a certain way to those who oppose.

And yet you don't believe that God says that by your mercy they ought to obtain mercy. That's verse 31 of chapter 11. Even so, these also have now been disobedient that through the mercy shown you, they also may obtain mercy.

It's not enough to be, quote, tolerant. It's not enough even to be sentimentally disposed toward them, as some Christians are. They just love the Jewish mystique and they love Israeli things and they want to plant trees.

God is wanting something more. That through your mercy they might obtain mercy. So I've mentioned now two profound things that God is waiting for, for the Jewish people, by which he has elected only one agency to fulfill, the church.

First, to move them to jealousy and that by your mercy they might obtain mercy. And there's yet a third thing, and this is a little bit more speculative, but I come increasingly to feel this, and that's in verse 15. Well, it begins in chapter 10, let's say from verse 11, for the scripture says, Whosoever believes on him will not be put to shame, for there's no distinction between Jew and Greek.

For the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon him. For whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Then Paul turns to his own kinsmen.

But how then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent, as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things. So what I want to suggest here is that really by and large the Jewish people, the mainstream of modern Jewry, have not yet heard the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, because it needs to come to them in a distinctive way by those who are sent. That's the Greek root word for apostolic.

In a word, they need to hear an apostolic proclamation of the gospel. They need to hear it in a certain quality of power and penetration that has been characteristic of Jewish missions and other well-meaning intentions up until now. What I'm really trying to say is that the message of the gospel to the Jew has been waiting for the coming forth of an apostolic church and an apostolic people at the end of the age.

That again it can be said, as we talked earlier in these weeks when Paul came to the Thessalonians, this pagan people, he said the gospel came to them in full conviction by the power of the Spirit. It came to

them apostolically. They were turning from their idols to serve the living God and to wait for his son Jesus.

Bang! Because of the power and the penetrating proclamation that came to them from the lips of an apostle. And I think that we have come full circle. That the Jewish apostle who brought the gospel to pagan Gentiles in full conviction by the Spirit is now waiting for that gospel and that power to come to them from the lips of an apostolic church.

So I praise God that we had an extra week that this is inserted in our consciousness. And I want to tell you that you can miss it either by your indifference or your rejection of Jews because let's face it, naturally speaking they don't, how shall I say it, they're not attractive. Quite the contrary, naturally speaking we're more likely as Gentiles to be irritated or provoked by them.

Luther was. Fiendishly. He foamed at the mouth.

In fact, the biographers of Luther say would to God he had died before he had written his famous tract on the Jews and their lives. An anti-Semitic tirade that inspired a generation of Nazis several centuries later who fulfilled the things that he prayed about in that statement. Burned the synagogues.

Destroyed the Talmud. Dispersed his people. And much fiery invective in an anger and a perturbation and a vexation that not only characterized Luther but every father of the church.

You know, right on down the line. St. John Chrysostom, the great preacher of the third century church in Asia. A giant of a saint as they all were and as Luther was.

All failed in only one area. The relationship with the Jew. There's something about this nettlesome people who were dispersed throughout all of the areas of the world where the church itself was taking root.

Just picture this. A church in its insecurity. Newly founded.

Composed of freshly saved Gentiles. Goyim is the Hebrew word. Untruthed, uninstructed.

Who were purporting now to understand the messianic scriptures. Who don't even understand Hebrew. And listening to the taunts and the jeers and the catcalls and the derision of the Jews in their communities saying where do you come off to handle our scriptures and say that that's what this means and that points to Jesus.

You're a bunch of blockheads. You're a bunch of goyim. You're dum-dums.

You don't know which end is up. You don't even know Hebrew. It's our native language.

We're birthed in it. We've taken it in with our mother's milk and the spirit of it and the whole tradition and wisdom of Jewry. And you're telling us what these scriptures mean? Can you imagine the buffeting that the church received from these severe Jewish critics? And if you know Jews, they're not modest and they're not disposed to bite their lips and keep silent.

Because the church provoked them. The church rubbed its hands in grief when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. and said da-da-da-da-da-da da-da-da-da-da-da we told you that Jesus was the prophet who was promised to come because he said not one stone would be left standing on the other and now it's been accomplished so there. What they really should have done was wept.

What they really should have done was been broken before the Jewish people to say he warned you. He wept over the city. He cried out that how often he would have taken you under his wings as a hen does her chicks but you would not.

And he warned you that not one stone would be left standing on the other but you defiantly ignored him and here's a final testimony even after the resurrection which you still failed refused to believe here's yet a fulfillment of his word. Can't we plead with you to reconsider and acknowledge your error and call upon his name and be saved. Instead what they were more likely to hear was a mocking report because there's something in the flesh, something about Gentiles and Jews some kind of tension, competition and friction that instead of responding in the spirit the church provoked them by the flesh and they retaliated in kind and it's been a downhill spiral ever since.

What I'm trying to say in all this is that we're going to have to find a quality of spirituality and a depth of sanctification which even Luther and the church fathers did not have. Praise the Lord, I'm in a much more receptive audience tonight than I was Monday in one of my classes where I spoke on the same subject and I went over like the proverbial red balloon. They were dead, they were indifferent and I think in some cases even agitated I didn't sense a disposition to hear that the church had an obligation toward the Jews.

In fact one student said broken out loud and said, are you trying to say that we're going to have to be more spiritual than Luther? I said yeah. Luther greatly neglected the subject of sanctification. He was so occupied with justification that he left it to others and allowed himself a certain degree of indulgence and fleshly and carnal defect that those whom the Lutherans persecuted, namely the Anabaptists would never have tolerated among themselves.

We need to understand this. In fact I don't believe that we Lutherans if I could use the expression are going to rise to this. In fact I'm speaking about the church in general tonight but of all of the church in particular to whom is the mandate really most pressing and most significant, that church which is the church of Luther.

That church that has historically persecuted them and that church whose home was in the land that saw the advent of Nazism that systematically annihilated them by the millions. It's the Lutheran church that in my opinion has the greatest obligation to the fulfillment of the mystery of the church and of Israel. And I don't believe that you're going to be able to take a step toward it until there's first a church-wide repentance for the historic failure in this regard and even a repentance for the myopia, the short-sightedness and I'm being very generous toward Luther in his latter days when he railed against the Jews and signed a death warrant of the Anabaptists and was instrumenting the persecution of both peoples.

Maybe that's what will take what will be necessary to effect a release of even our own spirits. As a matter of fact in 1977 when the Lord had me to speak a message on the Holocaust at the big charismatic conference in Kansas City before 2,000 people in an unplanned way and it's a whole saga of how the Lord brought forth that message out of a five-day fast. But before that was over and it was a historic occasion Gentile believers rose in the congregation who had German and Lutheran, Polish backgrounds and the Jewish believers, about 200 of them, stood and we faced each other and we forgave each other for the historic sins that we have inflicted upon each other through our fathers through the generations.

There was foot washing. There were shrieks and cries and broken expressions of repentance and reconciliation when we acknowledged our mutual guilt. So I want to say it's not a one-sided thing.

Yes, there has been a Lutheran failure toward the Jewish people. Although Luther in his earlier years spoke in quite another vein altogether when he lambasted the Catholic Church for his failure to be the kind of correct witness to them. But when Lutheranism succeeded with the Reformation his own witness and the example of those who bore his name was no better.

But we Jews also need to ask your forgiveness because we have been historically a thorn in the side of the church a factor, a presence of a certain kind that even when we kept our mouths shut, which was rare, we still were a kind of blasphemous statement toward your faith. That is to say that every Easter when the resurrection was again celebrated, the very presence of an unbelieving community of Jews, 1500 years after the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus, still unwilling to bow or to call upon his name or to acknowledge him as Messiah or as Lord, was a mute statement to the fact that they believed that you were in error. That Jesus was not the Son of God and that he was not conceived by the Holy Ghost, but as the Talmud hinted, which hints have since been removed, but which existed in the Talmud at the time of Luther and which he saw and was brought to his attention in Hebrew, veiled references to Jesus and to Mary that were blasphemous.

That the conception was through a Roman soldier or some other kind of thing and Luther knew of these statements and the blasphemies and one of the things that spurred him to the kind of vehemence toward the Jewish community that he did was the feeling that if he did not publicly oppose these blasphemous inferences or statements or whispers that the wrath of God would come not only upon the Jews who were making them but on the church that pretended not to know that they existed. So, there's a whole history of tremendous provocation between the Gentile and the Jew between the synagogue and the church that needs to be turned around and well-meaning intention will not suffice. Only such a depth of transformation, such an in-working of the character of Christ, such a demonstration of his patience and forbearance and his mercy.

But if we ourselves don't know the mercy of God, how then shall they obtain it from us? If we had been satisfied only with a doctrinal agreement, a subscribing to correct scriptural statements about the grace of God and the mercy of God, but have never seen ourselves as sinners really saved by grace and who have received the mercy of God, how shall we communicate something that they might obtain? In other words, there's a very great issue that this mystery is not going to be fulfilled so long as we are satisfied to remain at a nominal doctrinal level but that we have to move from mere doctrinal subscription to such a realistic appropriation of the knowledge of God's grace and mercy as has never characterized the Lutheran Church to this day. In fact, one of the severest critics of that failure is Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book, *On the Cost of Discipleship*, in which he rips and tears at the Lutheran Church for its cheap grace. You want to hear a little extract? If you've not read the whole book, I would greatly recommend it because very few have taken up this issue.

Cheap grace, he says, is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance. Baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without contrition. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ living and incarnate in the believer.

We Lutherans have gathered like eagles, he was a Lutheran theologian, like eagles around the carcass of cheap grace and there we have drunk of the poison which has killed the life of following Christ. It is true, of course, that we have paid the doctrine of pure grace divine honors unparalleled in Christendom because it's a cardinal tenet of the Lutheran theology but the knowledge of that grace, the reality of that grace, the

experience of that grace is another thing. You can lean on the grace of God and even make it a cheap excuse for inactivity.

You can be so opposed to a religion of works which was for Luther the most vile thing to consider and of course who are the most prominent exponents of the religion of works right smack dab in the midst of the Christian community? But the Jews themselves. So not only were there theological differences but the Jews were the very demonstration of the thing that moved Luther to distraction. A religion of works.

An ethical orientation that did not know the grace of God. But what has happened as we've come full circle in all this time that there's such a fear of works on the part of Lutherans that they fall into a kind of passivity and they're immune. Well if God wants it, it's all God and we're just like passive gulfs and waiting to be jerked by strings.

No involvement, no participation. That's a misuse of grace. And I'm not a theologian but I would say if grace is anything it's the enablement to fulfill the intention of God.

It's not an excuse for fulfillment. And the greatest fulfillment for which God is waiting and for which the church will never be the church in full is to take up the mandate of the most difficult people that are before us, the Jew. This gospel is the power of God and the salvation to everyone who believes.

To the Jew first and also to the Greek. And I have a strange hunch and I've believed this for years though I can't document it. God was not just playing on words.

When he says to the Jew first it's not just a nominal suggestion. He means that there actually is a divine order. That there's a reason why the first object of the attention of our evangelization should be to the Jewish people who are in our midst.

And in what community are they not in that he has dispersed them all over the face of the world. But you know what the truth of the matter is? That has been to the Jew last if it's to the Jew at all. You say, Art, why is that? I can tell you.

Because they're tough. Because they're fearful. Because they're intimidating.

Because they're threatening. It's a snap to preach the gospel to some drunken dolt lying in his vomit in the gutter who's had a Sunday school background somewhere in his childhood. But go and tell some superbly sophisticated and accomplished Jewish man with two or three university degrees on his wall who has never so much as raised his voice to his wife.

An ethical exemplar that he needs as your Christ in whose name his people have been persecuted for 2,000 years. And let's see how you do then. Let's see if you've got it together then.

Let's see if you don't stammer and choke and splutter. Let's see if you don't feel terribly inferior and inadequate to the occasion. Let's see if in that moment all of a sudden there's a flash of revelation of just how inadequate your spiritual life really is.

Which you never knew so long as you sat in the congregation of the saints threw your dollar in the collection plate and said your amens and hallelujahs and sang your choruses. There is something about the confrontation of the Jew which is the acid and ultimate test of our spirituality. And I praise God for it.

It's a put up or a shut up. And the reason I know it is not so much because I am a Jew it's because I'm married to one who is just like that and who is always looking to me to say well let's see it. Let me see the demonstration of what you're preaching.

My wife. Ultimate provocation. Ultimate vexation.

Ultimate test. It's painful but it's necessary. And we would never rise to the intention of God for our stature in him had he not established this test.

I'm not saying these things because I'm Jewish and I'm making the case for your involvement toward them because I'm Jewish. And I have a love for my people and in fact I have an ultimate calling toward them and in fact probably one day I'll die at their hands as Stephen. But I'm saying this because of my love for the church.

God has given us this challenge for our sake. There's a mystery of something that's being worked out. And if I had all kinds of time and you were ready to go on a real spiritual journey I could sketch for you a picture by which when the smoke clears at the very end of the age and God's purposes are finally consummated Israel is going to be God's witness to the nations.

God's coins and gifts are without repentance, Paul says. And what was their coin? A nation of priests and a light unto the world. You say, Arthur, look at their despicable condition today.

They are the ones who have given the world Karl Marx and they were into terrorism before the Arabs even heard the word. Begin and other of the Israeli leaders of today were early terrorists in their own nation. And pornography and rebellion and psychiatry and every kind of thing that has been adverse to the faith, you can always look prominently for the place of Jews in that.

How then shall they be? A light unto the world. A nation of priests. Because there's a grace of God that's going to come to them.

Not because they're deserving and not because their track record commends it but because God cannot help himself. Because it's his very nature. Because he'll have mercy upon whom he'll have mercy.

And how do you like them apples? And I'll tell you that if something rises up in you you say, but they don't deserve it! You know what you're revealing? You're revealing that you're not conscious of the fact that you also are the recipient of God's mercy and you didn't deserve it either. In fact, it's the very definition of what mercy is. It's a grace of God to the undeserving.

But if there's something in us that's chagrin and irritation, they don't deserve it. That shows the work that is yet to be done in our own hearts and minds. On my very last trip to Germany, I spoke in one of the most brilliant fellowships that I'd ever had the privilege to visit.

I could not get over the quality of the freedom and the spirit of God to be found in that Pentecostal congregation. And the first night I spoke to them, I spoke to them about the mystery of the German and the Jew. And by the time that night was over people were getting up out of their seats.

The young and the old. Those who grew up in a Hitler time and those who were born after. Each acknowledging hatred, bitterness, prejudice toward Jews.

And it had always been there, but no one had ever called them for it. No one had ever fingered it. And yet they were spiritual saints.

And tremendous in every regard, except for this fundamental defect. So I finish on 2 Christ. So long as our church holds the correct doctrine of justification, there's no doubt whatsoever that she's a justified church.

But what the church has done is that it justified the world and condemned as heretics those who tried to follow Christ. The result was that a nation became Christian and Lutheran but at the cost of true discipleship. The price it was called upon to pay was all too cheap.

Cheap grace had won the day. That's a tremendous statement by a Lutheran theologian who gave his life at the end of the Nazi time. So the three requirements of the church is the proclamation of the gospel in an apostolic way as those sent.

That it would come to them in the power of the spirit. One theologian writes because the herald who is sent speaks for Christ. Through him they hear Christ's voice and speech.

One cannot hear unless an apostle speaks in place of Christ. What is one sent? What does it mean to be an apostle? One is sent in place of another. Stands in the very place of Christ.

So in a word what is apostolic preaching? The fullness of the gospel in the same power and configuration and authority and penetration as if Jesus himself were proclaiming it to them. This is a lot more than saying are you saved brother or God has a plan for your life or four spiritual laws. You see what I mean? The premium is upon us to rise to this fullness where those among us who are joined with us in that same maturity can be sent forth and be the expression of that kind of voice and that kind of preaching that they might hear.

Because except that they hear how shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe except one be sent? Sent. The ironic thing is that the whole tendency now with the institutional church and particularly the Lutheran church has been away from the proclamation of the gospel and to a dialogue and this is now the posture of the church because it's much more accommodating to the Jewish community and especially since the holocaust how dare we have the audacity to proclaim the gospel to them in the light of what has happened to them at quote Christian hands unquote. So this is another hour, another age and the strategy now is dialogue and to meet them around the table by the way the condition of which is that the Jews require that you acknowledge the validity of Judaism as being as much as valid as Christianity, that you make no attempt to proselytize them by virtue of your discussion and that you come with an intention of as much learning from them as speaking to them.

That kind of dialogue they're willing to have. But that is such a tremendous and 180 degree turn away from the issue of the gospel. This gospel is the power of God unto salvation to the Jew first.

But if it's not going to be to the Jew first, is it going to be a power? And I believe that it's not only the Jew who has suffered by the substitution for dialogue rather than evangelism but also the Greek because if you fail in the proclamation of the gospel to the Jew in the power, as power, what do you think is going to be available as the proclamation to the Greek or to the Gentile? What I sense is a tremendous diminution, a decline, a reduction of the whole evangelical power and sharp cutting edge of the church since the movement away from evangelization toward dialoguing. In fact, the professor that I had at the seminary in

my very first course there on Judaism and Christianity was one of the pioneers in dialoguing with the Jews. And the man, in my opinion, was a pitiful shell, a castrated, I mean, robbed of his virility as a Christian.

He was just taken in, he was done in, in spitting out and going to countless dialoguing occasions and having lost even the sense of the reality of the faith which was once precious and dear. The issue of the gospel to the Jews, in a word, is the issue of the gospel. You see how everything comes together with them.

And because there's been a turning away of the gospel from them, there's been a decline not only in the proclamation of the gospel but in the whole evangelical temper of the church and finally in the church itself. So the church, apostolically, the church as church is at stake in terms of the challenge that comes with regard to the Jew. Of course, what's the easier thing to do? To dialogue or to proclaim the gospel? And what kind of a church it is will be determined by whether we choose that which is easier or we choose that to which we're called in obedience to the word of God that has not changed.

Paul said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. The gospel needs to be reclaimed. It needs again to be vitalized.

It needs again to be released as that power, but in the context and the order that God originally gave it to the Jew first. That's a task for an apostolic people. So, Paul says if the fall of them has been riches for the world and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness.

Again, I'm saying we're not just talking about the salvation of another ethnic people, however important that is. I want to see Puerto Ricans saved and you name them and distant people in every clime and language. But the salvation of the Jews contains with it more than just the issue of their own salvation.

It is the key to the nations. And finally, it's the key to the cosmic fulfillment of God's redemption for all creation. There are tremendous things waiting in abeyance for which they are the pivotal key.

And Paul says it. That if their fall has brought salvation and their failure riches, how much more their fullness. For if they're being cast away as the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? This will be a resurrection event.

The whole world that has been familiar with their track record. And we're going to see an increasing what shall I say, Gentilization of Israel. The Israel that thought itself to be unique among the nations and whose whole reason for being was the Zionist intention of showing forth another quality of nationhood that is more moral and ethical and inherently more civil than the Gentile nations has by the course of the pressures that have been put upon it been outdoing the Gentile nations in force, in violence, in terror and in tactics.

So for this nation to become the instrument by which other nations have revealed to them the grace of God is going to take an extraordinary stroke. What's the key to their turning and to their salvation that they might be an instrument to the nations and the nations then the key to the fulfillment of God's whole cosmic intention? The church. That through your mercy they might obtain mercy.

That by your salvation they might be made jealous. How shall we show mercy? Well, I think that as we go on increasingly to the end of the age, we're going to find out opportunities. In one sense it's evident that

the very proclamation of the gospel, even at the risk of offending and I'll tell you if you want to get shot down, if you want to get your fur burned and your toes trod, as I said try proclaiming the gospel to a Jew.

It takes uttermost courage and uttermost love which will not be seen as love. It will be seen as the most vile kind of offense. But God knows it's love and you know it's love and secretly in their own hearts though they may profess indignation and anger and bitterness, they'll know it's love too because they realize that you're doing something at great risk.

You're willing to risk of a loss of friendship. You're willing to risk of a loss of prestige, the loss of face. You're willing to look like a jerk.

You're willing to be publicly and verbally ostracized or beaten upon. You don't know what you're going to get in their violent reaction against the gospel and by the way not the least of the reasons for this vehement anger and resistance to the gospel is that they are so deeply ensconced in the world that the spirit of the world is so much part of their life that it's no accident that they're given to the world. It's Karl Marx's and Sigmund Freud's and Albert Einstein's and Eric Fromm's and all of these cultural geniuses.

They're in the world and the spirit of the world. They're given their gifts to the world and the world has them. So when you press the issue of the gospel to the Jew, you're not just bringing a subject for consideration.

You're challenging a system. You're challenging something that is rooted in the powers of the air that has jerked them by strings for two thousand years and doesn't want to yield them over to their God and to their Christ. And the anger and the vehemence is not so much just their own Jewish or temperamental outbursts as is the fury of the powers who don't dare allow you to succeed against them because they're one of the final issues that remains that will unseat the powers.

Because once the Jews come into their place toward the nations, what then is our place? They're in the earth with the nations and we're in the heavenly places with our Lord ruling and reigning as angelic beings who ascend and descend upon the Son of Man in concert with Israel working together from heaven and from the earth for the fulfillment of God's cosmic purpose. Do you think the powers of the air want to be unseated by a church that has finished its last task on earth to witness to the Jewish people that they might be turned to God, that they might then ascend and take their place in the heavenlies to rule and reign in a governmental way in the meekness of the Lamb where the powers of the air have been using that place in a subversive way to turn the attention of nations away from God? They know that the Jew is the key and we're going to find the severest opposition that may be expressed through Jew, or I've had fierce opposition from Gentiles and from Christians against my witness to Jews. Leave them alone! Haven't they suffered enough? Boy, I'll tell you, your ears will go red and you'll feel like scum and just what kind of horrid creature are you to plague this precious people who have been battered from pillar to post and have barely escaped the gas ovens and you now are trying to steal their souls? I've had outraged Jews tell me that you're worse than Hitlercats because Hitler only sought to destroy our bodies, you want to destroy our souls.

You want to rob us of our Jewishness and make Christians out of us. Are you prepared to give answer? Do you realize that the issue is not Judaism versus Christianity? That you're not just trying to win them over to another religious alternative but to bring them to the knowledge of the God of their fathers, that God isn't seeking to take away their Jewishness but to discover it? Do you realize that you're the branch that has been grafted in and that they were the natural branch broken off and that God is able to graft

them in again? Do you have that sense of the gospel, of the faith, of the mystery, of what has been going on, of what has been Paul's cry? I wish that I were accursed for my brethren's sake that they might know Christ. And I'll tell you, except that there's a degree to which that passion is in us.

If we come at them clinically and cold-bloodedly because we have an obligation, forget it! But how do we come to that passionate place that we're willing only because we've come to such a place in Him, such a union with Him? And I want to say that if our love for the Jews is only horizontal, it's only because of a certain fascination, a certain delight. We like Jewish music. It'll never last.

It'll never succeed in the tremendous backlash and opposition that will come. The only kind of love that will withstand the retaliation and the abuse that will be heaped up on us by both Jews and, quote, Christians is that we love them because we love the Father, because we love God, because we're in union with their God, and because of the quality and the depth of that union we have His burden for them. It's not sentimental.

It's not a mystique. It's not a fascination. It's the very love of God that will not let us go.

It's because we love Him that we love them. Any other kind of love is bogus and will not suffice. You see, whatever I'm saying, whatever point comes up, and I'm hardly looking at the notes that I've labored over, that there's a demand, a premium, and there's an urgent kind of thing, my God, if ever we had an incentive to grow up and to come into God's intention for the church in its fullness, this is it.

And it's not an accident. And there'll never be another incentive like it. What, church growth? What, you're going to measure the numbers in the congregation in the Sunday school enrollment? Or the budget? Or the program? You mean that can be an incentive to rise to the kind of stature that God is wanting here? No way.

The Jew, I wrote, is really the index of our sanctification. If you are resentful or begrudging toward them, it indicates that you have not understood or perhaps not received the mercy of God toward yourself. He will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy.

And if you are arguing with God, it means you have not surrendered to his sovereignty. He will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy. And he doesn't have to explain it to you.

And Paul says, who are you, O man, to take issue with God? Has not the pot of the right to do or declare what he will? Can God fit vessels for destruction that he might show forth his mercy? If we have a controversy with God, and it lurks in many of our souls, this will find it out. This will reveal it. If we so much as greatly complain, but how come they, why should they, and why should your mercy be extended? Because he will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy.

Because in the last analysis, the issue is God. Who he is, in himself, doing what he wants to do because it's fully his right. And all we can do is surrender before the majesty of his purpose and say, my God, who has been your counselor? And I want to sing something for your conclusion, okay? I'd love for you to learn this.

I used to sing it in community in Romans 11, the very end of the chapter. Paul can't contain himself. This enormous mystery, this phenomenal thing, this interaction between Jews and Gentiles, the church, and Israel is so staggering, it's so monumental, it's such a reflection of the glory of God.

It's such a scope that he breaks down in verse 33. Oh, the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. Who could have conceived a scheme of this kind? That with two peoples have been in such enmity, God makes it the issue of turning them around by the mercy of the one toward the other.

How when searchable are his judgments, his ways are passed, finding out who has known the mind of the Lord, who has been his counselor, who was first given to him, that it shall be given unto him again. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things to whom be glory forever. In the last analysis, the issue is not a sentimental regard for the Jews, or a sense of grieved conscience, we should be doing something.

In the last analysis, it's the one issue that is always the issue for that which is apostolic, namely unto him be glory forever. Amen. Here's how this is sung.

Oh, the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how when searchable are his judgments, and his ways passed, finding out for who has known the mind of the Lord, who has been his counselor, who has first given to him, and it shall be given unto them again. Something like that. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things to whom be glory forever.

Amen.

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