

Apostolic Foundations (2 of 12)

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the need for authentic apostolic foundations in the church to confront idolatry and societal values through true worship and ministry.

Duration: 59:03

Scripture: Acts 17:22

Topics: "Apostolic"

Description

In this sermon, Paul passionately addresses the audience, emphasizing the urgency and significance of their spiritual journey. He prays for God to guide and inspire them, while acknowledging the challenges they may face. Paul highlights the central message of our existence, which is to seek and be found by God. He dismisses the notion that this purpose is outdated or incompatible with culture and civilization. The sermon concludes with a prayer for God to reveal the essence of apostolic foundations and empower the church to spread His word throughout the world.

Transcript

And I want to reiterate everything that was said last week. Get the tape. But we reminded you of Paul's injunction to the saints in Thessalonica who had been converted out of paganism and idolatry to serve the living God and who believed that the word that was spoken was not the word of man but the word of God.

And because they believed that, that's what it constituted for them. It became an event. And we're trusting God for event, week by week by week, that by the end of the twelve weeks, I don't know what will be the result of all this, it's got to be significant and impactful.

So I appreciate your prayers for me. I don't say that I'm under unusual attack, just a regular attack. But I think that the enemy is aware perhaps more than perhaps his saints of the significance of what God is about.

I have here my yellow sheet that I scrolled last week and hardly used. And then I've got the transcript from a speaking on the same message given at Youth with a Mission in Lausanne, France. And that was epical, five days, day and night on apostolic foundations.

And I feel this tonight just to read the prayer that was also transcribed here because it's appropriate for us also. So join your hearts with me in this. Lord, show us the anatomy, the heart, the substance, the spirit of

that which is apostolic.

Breathe upon this text now and penetrate our understanding. Show us what is timeless, universal, eternal, the things to which we ourselves are called, that your word may become an event for your church and through your church over the earth. Be with us tonight, precious God, in your special and particular way.

The source of all, the God of great originality, the God who in the beginning created and who still creates, still original, fashion, put together, form. Bring forth, my God, the manner in which it shall please you to assemble this word tonight. Thank you for so glorious a text.

Thank you that it's not a piece of fiction, that it's drawn out of the blood and the sweat, the guts, the exertion, the agonizing, the glories of a flesh and blood man like as we, even the Apostle Paul, and men and women like him who are joined in that generation to that kind of authenticity. And Lord, you're doing something in our hearts by which that is becoming our desire. You're spoiling us for anything less.

And we don't ask for a replication of the book of Acts, that somehow we become a carbon copy, a wooden facsimile of what was once powerfully authentic. But we ask, my God, that we might be apostolically powerfully authentic in our own generation by the same God and by the same spirit with the same mindset and single-eyed devotion and uncompromisingness to our own generation with as much impact as they in theirs. And we'll thank you and praise you because we know you're able, we know that that's your desire, and we desire it with you, Lord.

So speak so as to perform this, and we'll thank you and praise you for it. In Jesus' holy name, and God's people said, Amen. Now, we have a number of people who were not here last week.

Raise your hand. That's quite a number. I wonder if we should read the text again or else you'll be blinking at what I'm referring to.

Starting in Acts 17, verse 16, Paul in flight, Paul being sent by his comrades to avoid the persecution that his apostolic presence somehow generates. There's some fond of saying to the church in the Western world, the fact that we have not known persecution is a scandal. That's a statement of something amiss.

It should be part and parcel of the true and the apostolic life. If we're not engendering, if we don't provoke, if there are no sparks, if we're just a pleasant corner institution in our neighborhoods and hardly anyone looks up to that degree, we are falling short of the glory of God, and we're not in the faith once and for all, given the saints. We should anticipate persecution.

And while we're yet waiting for it to come from the world, you might find it therefore coming in other places, sometimes one's own household, or one's own employer, or a subtlety of things that we need to recognize for what it is. An outraged network of princes and powers of the air who know what we're about, that we constitute a threat to the kingdom of darkness, and they are opposing us in ways so as to discourage and to limit the forcefulness and the significance of our activity. And until that reaction comes to us full-blown in the world, we're likely to find it in surprising places.

But we ought not to be surprised, but rather to rejoice. Amen? Amen. Okay, so Paul was fleeing, and it says in 14, And then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea, and Silas and Timothy remained there.

Now those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed. Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols. So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be present.

I've got to bring the King James that no other version really does this justice. So as the spirit within him grieved as he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews and in the marketplace daily with those who met with him. There's a therefore that is the consequence of grieving, and there's a grieving that is the consequence of seeing a whole city given over to idolatry.

It's a sight that's not reserved for those who visit Athens. It's a sight available to those who visit St. Paul if they could but apostolically see things as they truly are, which is to say as God sees, which is the distinctive of apostolic seeing. He saw the city wholly given to idolatry and he grieved.

Why? Because he was a true worshiper and that qualified him to discern the thing that was false. Remember how the whole thing began a Sunday or two ago? And while they ministered unto the Lord and fasted in Acts 13, the Holy Ghost said, in the moment of true worship, corporate worship, in the diversity of men of race and ethnic background who had every reason in the world to bristle at each other, when they were found to be in a place of worship unto him without distraction in a transcendent way that cannot be obtained by mere Sundays alone, the Holy Ghost said, separate unto me. He caught them in that high-water mark of ultimate worship.

And though the Scripture doesn't say what it constituted, I suggested when I shared this that it might even have been an awesome silence together, which is maybe the most difficult thing, to keep our restive souls quiet and the itch crucified and to be in such a place before God that it's all the same to us whether we go or whether we remain. I'll tell you, the going is as much worshiping as the remaining. And if the ministry is not a worship, it's not a ministry.

And lest we think that this means charismatic choruses, as much as I love them, we need to remember that where God speaks something at the first, we have the purest and most definitive expression of that thing. And you remember where the word worship is first spoken in Scripture. Genesis 22, Abraham taking Isaac up to the mount to sacrifice him, his only son, whom he loved.

And he said to his servants, You remain down here with the ass. I and the lad will go yonder and worship. That's the kind of worship that God is talking about.

A worship that is a sweet-smelling savor, a sacrifice unto God that costs something. Once you know that, you can sniff out the false thing, the counterfeit, the substitute, as Paul did in Athens and it grieved him. And we saw what the consequence was.

Therefore, we saw the point of apostolic beginning, the inception of an apostolic event, began with the Spirit of God grieving in the spirit of a man, when he saw. That's what I love about Paul. He's not one of these estates, these spiritual tripping-on-eggshell types.

He's not so faint that if you look the wrong way, he melts. He's full-orbed. He's a mensch.

He's through and through. He's the thing in itself. He's a full man who sees.

He's not so spiritual that he can't look. He's not so spiritual that he didn't know, as even as your own poets have said, that somehow he was afraid to touch Greek poetry or was unaware of what Stoic philosophy or Epicureanism was. He was an informed man and it did not in any way threaten his true spirituality.

And a lot of us who think that it will be cop-outs, cowards, and slothful. We don't want to exert ourselves to know what's going on, what is rife in our own culture. And if you can understand this, nothing has changed.

The titles may have changed. Epicureanism and Stoicism may be defunct, topically speaking, as philosophies, but the substance of it, what they are about, the mindset, the self-servingness of these philosophies as alternatives to true relationship with God, that still exists. We but need to recognize it as he did.

So, just to focus in on the inception of an apostolic event that begins with the Spirit. What is apostolic is eminently of the Spirit. It begins in the Spirit.

It's conducted in the Spirit. It's in the power of the Spirit. But it's in a man who sees and who grieves.

Therefore, disputed he in the synagogues with the Jews. You say, what's the connection? He's grieved with idolatry, and he disputes in the synagogues with the Jews? What's the connection? Everything! Can't you see it? Just to repeat again, where is idolatry most blatantly practiced? Both in the synagogues of the Jews and in the synagogues of the Gentiles. That is to say, any kind of place of religion that serves the interest of man rather than God, no matter what vocabulary it employs.

It can employ a Jesus vocabulary, but can be a man-serving institution in the sense that men will put their dollar in the collection plate, give an hour, feel they've done their service, and are released from any further obligation to serve their own idolatrous interests. Just give them enough appeals on the organ and stained glass windows or whatever the charismatic equivalent is, and don't think it can't be found in Charismatica. Any substitute for authentic relationship with God that falls short of the acknowledgement of His Lordship, which is unto death or it's nothing, is idolatry.

That's an off-the-cuff definition for a guy who's wearing a short-sleeved shirt. That's why the therefore is there. And so he was in the marketplace speaking with those who were there, quote, happened to be there.

No such thing in the epistolic life as just happening to be there. Everything orchestrated, everything calculated, finely tuned by the intention of God. It's mind-boggling.

We cannot believe in a sovereignty that is so all-inclusive as this, because this seems to be happenstance. And Paul never calculated upon going to Athens. It wasn't part of his itinerary.

As I said last week, he didn't write ahead to the full gospel businessman to say, I'm coming. Circumstance brought him. But circumstance was every bit as divine as the vision that he received of the Macedonian beseeching him, come help us, that he experienced in Acts 16.

And we need to recognize the divinity of circumstance and circumstantial things as much as we recognize it in things that are revelational by vision or by dream. Do you understand what I'm saying? All of life is sacrosanct. All of life is holy.

It's all a sacrament. Don't give us this artificial business of the secular and the sacred. That's the world's cop-out definition.

Paul would never accept it. It was all to be permeated by God. The earth is the laws and the fullness thereof and the nations of those that dwell therein.

He didn't recognize Sunday as distinguished from any other day in the sense that only then do you speak spiritual things and consider spiritual things. The spiritual is brought into the secular and eternity into time and the holy into the profane. And if it's not, you know what we'll experience? Exactly what we've got.

A crummy, besotten, corrupt and perverse, degraded, vile world everywhere about us because there has not been an apostolic church a priestly people to bring the sacred into the profane. We've allowed the world to define the game and to determine the categories. Praise God for my naivety as a high school teacher just saved who just didn't understand that somehow the classroom was for history and religious matters take place on Sunday in a sanctuary.

I gave invitations in my history classroom where 18 kids raised their hands and followed me in a prayer to receive the Lord. With the Holy Ghost coming down that you had ghost pimples like Mount Himalaya. I was just too naive to understand that somehow God was to be left outside of our conversation and discussion about history and its meaning.

Of course, I've got a few notes from the principal's office that my wife still keeps in an album. And it's strange that the complaints that came came from Christian parents. Of course, Christians of a kind.

A kind who were terrified and threatened because their kids were hearing something about the reality of the supernaturalness of a God that might jeopardize their middle-class futures. Interesting. And even the principal himself was a Presbyterian lay reader just about to retire.

He had worn the blinders and played it safe. Except for this nettlesome irritant who didn't know the distinction between sacred and secular. Just making it safe to retirement.

Had his plans and had his travel trail and all that jazz ready with his maps. Didn't enjoy it long. Dropped dead about three months after.

He said to me, Mr. Cassie said, don't you know that we're getting complaints from these parents and I've called you in here again and again. Don't you know you're exceeding the limitations, so to speak? And I, what did I know? All I knew was to open my mouth and trust God. I'm still doing it.

I said, well, I said, if you were on a beach and you saw someone drowning and they were sinking for that proverbial third time and the water was snorting out of their nose and ears and they were choking and spluttering and there was a sign on the beach that said, no swimming allowed, would you not go in? Get out of my office, he said. You guys were laughing and enjoying this. Tomorrow you make your application in the office.

In IBM or wherever you are in the safety and the security of the place where God has put you, where you have been wearing the blinders and walking circumspectly. Don't be so circumspect. Let God express himself through you.

Take the risk. I think that what we often do, and I recognize this as an ex-teacher, is that we restrict ourselves more than society itself demands. We impose upon ourselves more restriction for fear that somehow we're going to transgress.

I want the full range of possibility, right to the outermost extremity and even beyond it. Because life is at stake. And that day when those 18 kids were in the discussion of life after death in Egypt and how the Holy Spirit took it and moved them to the issue of salvation and what I wrote on the board and what we remembered from the study of Hebrew civilization and blood sacrifice and I picked up Isaiah 53, got my Bible from the desk and read it and gave an invitation.

I remember saying to those kids, if you'll not come to a church, God has brought his church to you. So I think Paul was of that spirit. In the marketplace and in the synagogue.

Didn't know the boundaries or the distinctions. And the men who heard him calling him a babbler brought him up to Mars Hill. To hear what's the strange thing that this babbler says for the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.

You know what I've done in my Bible? To spend their time in nothing. That's the way I read my Bible. To spend their time in nothing.

And doesn't that grieve your spirit? Man made in God's image, spinning his wheels. Play actors and performers who are insincere about life. Misspending it.

They themselves are the babblers in a professed concern for truth and for philosophy. Always seeking but never coming to the knowledge of it. This ought to break our hearts for that senseless way in which human life is misspent on earth.

The varicose veins and the ulcers and the mismanages and the havoc and the hell and every kind of freaky thing that is afflicting kids and everything going berserk. It's a horrendous calamity against the design of God. Of man made in his image.

And we like dummies are closed mouth about it. Cluck our tongues and look the other way. We ought to shriek.

We ought to blow the whistle. We ought to confront. We ought to challenge.

We ought to reveal the unquestioned and unchallenged false premises by which the world lives its life. Its crummy values that are out of the pit of hell that not only have no eternal value but blind men to the things that are eternal. You say, why haven't we spoken to it? Because we have succumbed to it.

Because those values have become our values. Because we have not the sense of eternity that Paul had. Because we're not as authentic so as to contradict and to reveal the thing which is feigned and counterfeit.

The whole world lies in the wicked one. The father of lies. If we don't know that and don't live as if we know that what shall we expect from the duped and from the unseeing? It's going to take an apostolic encounter to break the blindness of men and to pierce their deception and nothing less will.

The thing in itself the authentic thing, the full or thing needs to be presented before men that they can both hear and see what God's normative and definitive intention for all mankind is. Here it is, folks. Take a look at this ex-murderer and persecutor of the church and see what my grace has wrought and what I'll do for

as much for any of you who will I surrender as totally as he has.

Whose first statement in the blinding light that fell upon him on his way to wreak havoc in the church was Lord, what would you have for me to do? Tell him what great things he must suffer for my namesake. You say, I never asked that question. I've been a believer 30, 40, 50 years.

It shows. It's not a question that you ask once. It's a question that is asked continually.

You continually live in the spirit of that question. Lord, what would you have for me to do? I'm so insane about it, I don't even know how to dress myself. I stand before that closet with my glittering wardrobe.

I say, Lord, how would you have me to dress tonight? I mean, I'm insane about it. And I've got two degrees already and I'll have another one if I don't get kicked out this year. That's free.

And I still don't know how to dress myself. I'll see you after the service. You understand what I'm saying, folks? Such a submittedness of Paul to God that even his accidents and happenstance being carried and brought by other men brings him to Mars Hill.

And being brought to Mars Hill is no little thing. It's an ultimate thing. And I don't know what I would suggest would be a corollary to Mars Hill today.

Would it be some place in Washington, D.C.? Would it be, I don't know what, some significant place where men who themselves affect society and the world meet? Wherever that place is, that's where God brought Paul and where he will bring us also when he can find a people like him. And where someone like that needs desperately to be brought to Mars Hill, the vector, the cross center of the world, the epitome of everything opposed to God. Not in gnarled, fisted opposition, that would be easy to identify, but in a more surreptitious and syrupy quasi-religiosity and philosophicalness that seems to be interested in spiritual things and ultimate things and questions of truth, but is just as devious and just as much a lie as the most blatant and horrendous forms of Satanism.

That's where God brought Paul. It was a collision between polarities and antibodies. The Apostle Paul, the full-orbed man of God, the incarnate thing meeting the spirit of this world head-on, its philosophy, its craftiness, its sadacity, its wildness and subtlety with its beautiful monuments and its inscriptions to the unknown God.

You would have been impressed. You would have been awed and your jaw would have dropped at the glory that was Greece. Paul was not impressed.

He said, how come not? He came from a much greater place than Greece. And I'm not talking about Tarsus, nor am I talking about Israel. He was a citizen of heaven.

He had his conversation there. That doesn't mean his chitchat. It means the substance of his life and being.

He was a heavenly man in every way. And only a heavenly man can be impervious and indifferent and unaffected by the splendor and the awesomeness and the authority of the world and see through its fabrications and through its deceptions and not be in any way taken in. Only heaven.

Only heaven. Then Paul stood in the midst of Areopagus and said, Oh, I love that. I don't know if I'll ever get off this.

Stood in the midst. Smack dab. Strategically placed by God in a once and for all, never to be given again situation.

All history is at stake in that moment. As well as the eternity, the future of heaven or eternal doom and hell for the men hearing him there. I don't have words enough to express the enormity, the magnitude of an apostolic moment.

Except to say that every moment is apostolic. Charged, full, fraught with consequence. Eternity, life and death hanging in the balance.

I don't see that, Art. Like tonight. Isn't this just a Bible study? No.

Life and death is hanging in the balance. Issues of eternity are being affected. God's eye is rolling to and forth over this audience.

His spirit is speaking. He's seeking. He's fingering.

He's pressing. He wants to draw out men like this who will ascend hills like this without any guarantee of ever coming down again. This is not Bible study.

This is events. It's charged. Paul stood in the midst and said.

And last week we reviewed and I asked you, what would you have said? If you were in that condition, in that situation, what would you have said? What human wisdom, what past experience, however blessed by God would be appropriate now in this peace of eternity standing still? And here's a man who did not even, what's the word, mediate. He didn't conjure. He didn't write hasty notes before going up.

It was bang, bang, bang. The synagogue, the marketplace, and they took him. There he was in the midst.

And Paul turned and said, The spontaneity of God. The God who is instant, in, season, and out. The God who is never caught short, never slumbers nor sleeps.

Has an answer. Has a word. The thing is that he would like to express it through human mouths.

But we censor him. It offends our Lutheran sensibility. It's insulting.

Or maybe it will offend someone. It's not nice. I don't know how many Christians are afraid of offending their Jewish neighbors because it's not nice.

I want to ask you, how nice is hell? We're dupes. We've been sucked in by that philosophical spirit of the world. No wonder we're not in a position to confront.

We need ourselves to be confronted. And indeed we're being confronted in these days by this word. And we observed last week how Paul began with an insult.

He didn't say, Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking. Being a visitor to these parts, I would just like to say, what he said was, You men of Athens, I observed that in all things you are too superstitious. Whap! Right smack in the kisser.

Because if an intellectual hates anything, it's to be told that he's superstitious. I know some of your versions say too religious, but it means the same thing. Too worshipful of demons.

Too pontificating. Too phonying it up. So while I pass through and examine the subject of your worship, or the object of your worship, and you tell me how an object can ever be worshipped, that's got to be idolatry.

I found an author with the inscription to an unknown god, whom you therefore worship ignorantly, I proclaim unto you. That's what we call in Yiddish chutzpah. Now I know you can't say chutzpah.

But chutzpah means brass. I mean it means, phew! It's the thing only a Jew will do. You know.

It's just, him I, he I proclaim unto you. Who are you? What are you, the authority on this subject? Yeah. There are few men who know God better than I, who have known him in the fellowship of his sufferings.

Not in the respectful halls of the seminary. Now I'm in a position to proclaim him unto you. In fact, more than that, I'm in a position to demonstrate him unto you.

Now if you'll understand this right, you know what God is waiting for? A day in the history of the church, when it can say it to the world, if you see me, you see the Father. Or you see the Lord. Or it can say with Elijah, it shall not rain nor dew, but according to my word.

What? The arrogance, the presumption. Or, is it really unspeakable humility? Depends how you see it. But you could be assured of this.

However meek we in fact are, and meekness is an apostolic distinction, and doesn't mean that you walk on eggshells. It means that you have no life unto yourself or for yourself. Doesn't mean that you always are in whispers.

You'll sometimes blare like a trump. You can be assured that no matter how meek you are, the world will always call that arrogance. Will always call that presumption.

Will always call that conceit. And how dare you, and by what authority do you speak these things? Are you going to be prepared for that? By the way, there is a preparation for this, so don't feel like we're ready to go tomorrow. Paul was many years in the forming, and so also are we, but it's time.

So Paul was not prepared to allow these cop-outs to get away with their subterfuge. He wasn't going to let them get by with their comely phrases to the unknown God. He whom you worship in ignorance, what he's really saying is, whom you willfully worship in ignorance, I declare unto you, because their ignorance is willful.

There's a human thing that does not want to know God. It may want to know about Him. It may want to have the trappings.

It may want to have some semblance, some appearance, some seeming spirituality, some reference, but it doesn't want the authentic knowledge which requires. Knowledge is costly. You don't know God as a subject matter for dilettante coffee time, coffee table conversation.

The knowledge of God is privilege unspeakable, but there's requirement as well. And that's why all of us here are in varying places in that knowledge. Not that the Lord is withholding or does not desire the greater and more intimate knowledge of Himself, but somewhere in our own cop-out hearts, in our own unwillingness to come to the place of what such knowledge will cost, many of us are happy and content with the level that we have.

They wanted God to be not only unknown, but to be thought of as unknowable. And it's a metaphysical sham. It's a pretense.

It's a philosophical cop-out. And this is practiced by Stoics and Epicureans who are philosophers and who love to celebrate things ethical. You know what Paul was showing them in one fell swoop? That by your unwillingness really to know God, by your willingness to be satisfied with just the appearance of a seeming spirituality that seems so sacrosanct to the unknown God, so respectful, it shows a contradiction right at the heart of the matter with your profession in being both intellectual and ethical.

In a word, they were stripped bare by Paul. He blew the whistle. He revealed their false premises.

They were neither ethical nor intellectual, or the unknown God would have been known by them or sought by them. You understand what I'm saying? You don't understand. I can see it.

These are philosophers who pride themselves in their intellectuality and in their ethicality, in their concern for ethics. What is right? What is true? What is noble? And it took this prepossessing Jewish character coming as a rag-picker, that's what it means, babbler, to show them in one fell swoop statement, in his own speaking and his own proclamation, in his own being, that they were just a bunch of phonies who made an appearance of intellectuality and ethical and moral concern, but their unwillingness to know God showed what their true colors are. And if I could be allowed the liberty, I'm not very far from making this statement about the condition of the Jewish community today.

You can see it. With all of its regard for being ethical, moral, with all of its concern for righteousness, the fact that there has been a 2,000 year history of an unbroken continuum of something that has to do with a Jesus of Nazareth, and that increasing numbers of Jewish men and women themselves are being brought into that relationship without missionary effort by a kind of sovereign work of God, that there's a Bible, that there's a testimony, that there's a New Testament that is a record of Him, that if all that could be written were written, the world would not be good enough to contain the book. But these things are written that you might be saved.

And yet never open that book, never raise the question, never ask, never inquire, and yet profess to be ethical, profess to be moral, profess to be religious. Somebody needs to blow the whistle. Somebody needs to reveal the sham, the pretense, the posturing, the affectation, and only that one who is authentic can.

That's painful when that revelation comes. It came from me, who thought himself a lover of truth since my earliest recollection. A kid who went to school in Brooklyn with Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, volumes so heavy I could barely squeeze them into the subway car, and salivating as I read philosophy, wanting to know truth, and wanting to know it so badly I was a high school dropout because I recognized early enough that's not the place where it's to be found.

I had to look, I had to travel, I had to seek, I had to become a Marxist, I had to exist, go through philosophies, ideologies, such a search. Until my 34th year, I picked up a book, Greek book, called the New Testament, aboard the deck of a ship on my way to Greece, paying spiritual homage to what was my true identification. I was a Hebrew by accident, I was a Greek by conviction, humanist on my way to Greece, to Athens, and picking up a New Testament from a fellow Jewish passenger, reading it for the first time.

A man who had never opened a scripture in 34 years, a Jesus hater, and the first reading, wow, revelation from heaven, trembling, broken, pierced through, a sword cutting me asunder, the soul and the spirit, the recognition, I'm reading the book of God, how could he have it? I'm a history student and teacher, how could God have a book and maintain its integrity for these millennia? But I know it's true, his spirit has revealed it in one utterance of the mouth of Jesus, and therefore Jesus is who he claims to be. But I didn't shout Hallelujah. 34 years of questing, and the revelation comes of him who is truth, and I didn't shout Hallelujah.

You know why? My first thought was, what's your mother going to say about this, hot shot? How about your intellectual colleagues in California? What about the Jewish community? What about? And I wrestled against God for six months, having had Jesus revealed to me, until he backed me into a corner in Jerusalem, where I could run no more, and finished off the work that he began. You know what that revealed to me? I was a cop out. I was a phony, I was a deceitful man.

I presumed to be a seeker after truth, but when truth was revealed to me, I hedged. I hesitated. I would not receive.

I would not commit. I had to wrestle like Jacob of old, till finally. How many of us know truth, to which we have not yet surrendered? How many of us know things to be true, to which we have not acceded, and made it true, and appropriated it, so as to walk in it, and have been satisfied just with the cerebral acknowledgement? That's not apostolic.

In fact, no apostle will ever allow you to get away with that. If it's not a living truth, if it's not effectual, if you're not walking in it, if you've not surrendered to it, you've made it a lie. We need to understand the deceitful nature of man.

Hey, come on, don't you know Luther? Don't you know total depravity? Or are you impressed with the outward appearance of philosophers, or Jews, who are next door neighbors, who have university degrees, never raise their voices to their wives, pictures of equanimity and poise, and having it all together, and you're impressed, because you don't see through, because you're taken in by the outward appearance, because in your heart you know that if you really see the situation as it is, something will be required from you that occasion's trembling. What will they say? If you were to suggest to them that they're in need of your Messiah, it's an affront. How dare you impose your concept of religion upon me, etc., etc.

Paul wasn't undaunted. Paul was unintimidated. Or perhaps I should say, unintimidatable.

We need to come to that place. We need to see things as they are. Even at their worst.

And respond to that real thing. Paul demolished the pretenses and exposed the shams. That's what an epistolical confrontation is.

The unquestioned, the unchallenged premises by which the world has its life is revealed and found out and shown to be false and is falsely influencing and dominating the lives of untold millions. Its values stink. But no one has said so.

And then Paul goes on to say, 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. The God who made the world, the Creator, is also the Lord of heaven and earth. If only he would be content to be the Lord of

heaven, only be content to be Creator, but when He is the Lord of earth, that includes Athens, it includes Mars Hill, it includes the marketplace, it includes the synagogues, it includes everything.

He is the Lord of all or He is the Lord of nothing. In one statement, Paul shows an indivisible connection between a God who is a Creator and a God who is also Lord. He will not allow man to get away without recognizing that implication.

That's what the angels pronounced in Bethlehem in the day that Jesus was born. Unto you this day is born in the city of David, a Savior. But it didn't stop there.

Even Christ the Lord. An angelic pronouncement from the first, an unbroken conjunction, which we have allowed to be broken and needs to be enforced on the consciousness of men. You cannot talk about God in the abstract and ignore the issue of His Lordship.

That is the ultimate cop-out. It's the ultimate deceit. And if you have satisfied yourself with that, on what basis then is your entire life being lived? If you have at the foundation of your life a falsehood, what then is the general condition of your life in terms of truth? These kinds of questions need to be pressed on the consciousness of those who are about us.

And by the way, if it's just the next-door neighbor or the girl who's working alongside you in the office, for you, that's Mars Hill. He has no need of temples made with human hands. He's not served by human hands as though he needed anything.

That presumes that God served the purposes of men. That shows the egocentric perception that these Greeks had which pertains to this day. That somehow they're doing something for God.

That God is something who can fit into their architecture and serve their ends. And that theme, that egocentrism is rife in our modern-day Christendom. Accept Jesus and this is what you'll get.

These are the blessings that will accrue to you. You have a domestic problem, a spat, you need a boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife, fortune, a turn for the good for business. Accept the Lord.

It's a transaction of something that accommodates man according to his need. That something's rotten in Denmark, terribly rotten at the very heart of the matter because the thing from which God would save us is the egocentrism that permeates the totality of this sensate world. But to bring that into the house of God and predicate the services and the ministries and the programs to the needs and the interests of men as if that's the foremost and single purpose for our being is to still be afflicted by the same egocentrism.

What's yet worse, to believe that by faith as a principle we can invoke certain promises and the word of God and make it to count for a Cadillac is the very thing that Paul saw and addressed with that statement. He's not made in temples made with hands. He has no need of you.

He's not a lackey to do your bidding. See, he has given to all life and breath in all things. Nothing has changed if we could but see it.

The same issues needing the same confrontation. But where are those who see the thing which is false and grieve in their spirits that there might be a therefore? Employing worship. Don't think we're off the hook yet that we can cluck our tongues at the faith message people.

We charismatics are guilty of the worship trip. Worship as device. Worship as manipulation.

Worship as a calculated soulish thing to affect the atmosphere of our services, to liven our congregations. Charismatic gifts to renew our denominations is still the same pervasive error. Putting God at the service of man and inverting the whole relationship to which we're called in truth.

And it will never be righted until there are apostolic men and women who see it and can speak to it and address it in the authority of God because they themselves are not subject to it. We can't speak with authority beyond what is the actual condition of our own life and experience. And if we're still playing a game and invoking Jesus like a genie lamp to receive benefit, if we still have an egocentric Christianity by which he serves us, we're not in a position to address the Stoics and the Epicureans.

Faith is not to invoke a Cadillac. Faith is to invoke glory. Faith is given.

Not that you should boast it's a gift of God. But it's the medium by which anything with God can happen that redounds to his glory. The God who gives life and breath in all things.

Could you say that? Hey, I'm not impressed. I wasn't pierced through when I heard that. And I'll tell you why.

Because deep in your heart you don't really believe it. That God gives life and breath in all things. Even your ills.

Even your painful domestic situation. Even the condition of your kids. Even that vexing thing at work.

Even your physical condition and your pains. Even the loss of your job and your security. Every horrendous, painful, mortifying, humiliating thing, is that also from the God who gives all things? And I don't know that I can go on to make a definitive case.

But I'll tell you what. I just like to take that perception. Before I will attribute anything to a natural cause or to circumstance, I will attribute it first to God.

Believing that He's sovereign. Believing that He's employing something. Believing that He's working something.

That He's not some indifferent spectator to the condition of the life of His men and women. We cannot say to the Greeks, He's the God who gives all things, if we ourselves do not believe it. And just receive the blessing as coming from God.

And will not acknowledge the things that are painful or mortifying or are a struggle. All. All.

Things. To surrender to that is really to surrender. And until we have, we cannot say it convincingly or penetratingly.

Well, I was hoping to speak about He has fixed a day in which He will judge all things. Where Paul invokes his sense, his eschatological sense, his apocalyptic sense of an imminent end. A God who went in times past is now commanding men everywhere to repent.

For He has determined a day in which He will judge all men by that one whom He has raised from the dead, even Jesus Christ. That Paul can go from philosophy to spiritual things in one breath is Paul. It's all one thing.

In Him we live and move and have our being. I guess I'm letting a signal to end. We ended last week and I don't know that I've gone much farther this week, but I guess you needed to hear it twice.

That God by one blood has made all men and established the bounds of their habitations. If happily they might seek after God that they might be found of Him for He's not far from any one of us. In one fell swoop statement that takes less than 15 seconds Paul speaking to men who spend all their time doing nothing but looking for some new thing, some philosophical thing, some answer to the enigma, the dilemma.

He tells them in one fragment of a minute what the purpose of our existence is. As only He can say it because He so profoundly believes it and because it's true. You say, Art, that's a medieval mentality.

What? The whole purpose of life is to be found of God? I mean, that's right out of the Middle Ages. That's the Dark Ages. There's no room there for culture, for civilization, for diversity, for culture.

I'm sorry folks. It's a timeless and eternal truth. Don't be deceived by culture, by its sophistication, by its technology, by its erudition, by its institutions.

See through to the purpose for which God has given men breath and life and established the bounds of their habitations that they might seek after Him if happily they might be found of Him. To persuade men of this while there's yet time is the purpose for our salvation and our being. And we'll never persuade them until we ourselves are persuaded.

Not that we believe it but that we live as if we believe it. And I'll tell you what the remarkable thing is. When you come to that kind of place you are remarkably indifferent to wealth, to success, to the recognition of men, to fame, to all kinds of things that make the hearts of men and women palpitate in the world.

You're somehow untouched. You're unaffected. You're in a transcendent place.

You know what the purpose of your being is. You've found it. You're serving that God.

And it renders you safe from and impervious to the kinds of downward tugs and pulls and seductive and siren calls that are everywhere about us in this sensual world saying, come lie with me. We've got to come to that place or God is not going to bring us to the Mars Hill of our own generation. To speak in a once and for all time to men who will forever stand before God responsible because they encountered Paul.

Because to encounter Paul is to encounter God. To encounter Paul is to hear God's perspective. Is to see as he sees.

As to hear the reality of things as God sees them. Who is not impressed with human achievement. And as one day men will see them when they cross the threshold of eternity in which there's no return and in which every value is eternally fixed and reversed unequivocally without redress.

Praise God this is on tape. You can hear that statement two or three times. That's why there's a fire in Paul's heart.

Eternity is at stake once and for all. Men need to be confronted who is sufficient for these things. Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill and said let's pray together tonight.

My prayer is Lord don't blow them out of the saddle. Don't discourage their hearts. Draw them in.

Week by week build something in their spirits. Set before them a vision of that to which we ourselves are called. This is going to spoil us for mere Sunday services.

But you're ready to be spoiled. Precious God we love you Lord. We thank you for the magnificence of what you're about in this earth.

It seems my God that you're so shunted to the sidelines. You're such an object of derision or scorn or mocking or blasphemy or indifference or neglect. And men are hurtling to their doom without any sense of the things that lie beyond this fragile life and this fleeting moment of temporal time.

And they've not been told. They've not been warned. They've not been confronted in the love, the truth, the power in the spirit of God.

And Lord we say again tonight we desire to be such. We're so far from it my God. We see even as you're speaking how much we ourselves have been seduced.

How much we ourselves have been given to idols. How much we ourselves have made our religion an egocentric game that satisfies our ends and has little or nothing to do with the glory of God. No wonder we have not been a voice to our own generation.

But we ask your help and your mercy Lord.

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