

Apostolic Foundations (5 of 12)

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the critical connection between apostolic character and the authentic proclamation of the gospel in his sermon.

Duration: 57:30

Scripture: Acts 20:18, Acts 20:35

Topics: "Apostolic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his observations of the ever-changing trends and fads in fashion over the course of 57 years. He emphasizes the importance of not being impressed or consumed by these worldly things, but rather focusing on the call and ministry given by God. The speaker encourages believers to live in a manner worthy of their calling, imitating Christ and being witnesses for Him. He also highlights the need for conviction and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life, contrasting it with a timid and unrequiring faith.

Transcript

We've been in on principally one text for about four weeks, Act 17. I believe we're finishing that text tonight and moving on to another. Sound okay? Those of you who have been in faithful and regular attendance may have recognized that we have omitted one last statement at the end of that precious chapter where Paul had just spoken about resurrection, about the day of judgment to come.

And it says, some said they will hear again of this matter, others scorned those references. Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, we shall hear you again concerning this. So Paul went out of their midst, but some men joined him and believed, among whom was Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Daenerys and others with them.

I love the King James there. But some claimed unto him and believed. So precious God Jesus, teach us what that means.

The man as the message, Lord, the precious and holy apostolic character of that man, one with the thing that he speaks. May we come to that oneness ourselves, my God. By virtue of the word that you speak, bless this night, make it holy, we pray.

We just thank you and praise you for yet another opportunity to sit at your feet and to hear from the Most High in Jesus' holy name. Amen. Well, there's a reference tonight about now there's no condemnation.

I just want to append that to say that that's not to say that there's no conviction. So if you get convicted, don't feel strange. That's a blessing from God.

I'm presently under conviction myself, and very likely in some way that's going to be reflected in this speaking tonight. So we've talked about apostolic reality and apostolic perception. We'll be talking further, but tonight the burden of the Lord is apostolic character.

And I want to direct your attention to two texts. I don't know if I'll get through both of them tonight. The first is in 1 Thessalonians, first chapter.

We've already quoted from that text in one of the earlier meetings about how when they heard the word of God, they received it not as the word of man, but as the word of God, which performs a work in them who believe that. And Paul in 1 Thessalonians, speaking to a people recently saved out of paganism, wholly contrary to the whole tenor and spirit of the God of Israel and his salvation and his way. I think we just need to have holy ghost imagination to realize how enormous a transaction the promulgation of the gospel was to pagan peoples by Jewish messengers like Paul.

First of all, recognizing the enmity between Gentiles and Jews, thinking of the antithetical character of Gentile and Jewish life, the way in which the one had looked upon the other through the centuries and then to have a representative come to them out of that Jewish culture and their view and mindset, one at whom they would probably be at arm's length and be apprehensive, and yet for the man to break through these cultural barriers and this enmity and this hesitation or fear is a remarkable statement about the quality of the man and of his proclamation. That's why Paul says in verse 5, For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction, just as you know what kind of men we prove to be among you for your sake. It's almost a travesty to move beyond that one scripture tonight.

It deserves an entire night to itself, but only to say that we need to at least notice this much, that the gospel came with full conviction, and it came in the power and in the Spirit, just as you know what kind of men we prove to be among you. I think King James says, what manner of men. So I want to offer tonight the suggestion that there's a correlation between the proclamation of the Word of God in power with full conviction by the Spirit and the quality and the kind of the character of the mouth out of that one from which it comes.

There's a conjunction between character and charisma, between holiness and power, and it's an emphasis that needs to be restored to our attention, because in the giddiness of our own charismatic age, there has been a diminution or a neglect of attention to the things that pertain to character and to life. And I myself am most guilty. I was embarrassed before the Lord today when he quickened this theme, and I had to apologize profusely.

I said, Lord, I should speak this? The contradictions of my own life? The terrible deficits and defects of my own life? So I'm not speaking to you from some Olympian height as one who is looking down from some kind of fully formed God-likeness and character, but one who is speaking out of his need more than out of his condition that has arrived. And therefore, I know that the Lord is speaking to me as well as to you. The fact that it's coming from my mouth doesn't in any way alter the fact that I'm as much on the receiving end

as yourselves.

What manner of men we proved to be among you for your sake. If you go through the writings of Paul, there are only two references that will recur again and again. For your sake and for the Lord's sake.

He knew no other sake, certainly not for his sake. He never took himself into consideration, nor did he regard anything else, nor men, nor reputation, two abiding, powerful motivations in the life of the apostle that God wants writ into the church itself. For your sake, for the sake of those to whom we're sent, and for the Lord's sake.

That itself is a foundation for character that could be called apostolic. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord. Again, we're faced with a quandary.

Is this another piece of Paul's arrogance and presumption to make such statements? Imitators of us and of the Lord? How does he dare to link us and the Lord? We're in one breath. Either it's the height of a front tree, or there's a genius of something spoken in here that should not escape our attention. Because we're not talking about self-made men, or men who take a deep breath and suck air and bite their lips to affect their certain kind of Christian conduct and standard.

We're talking about a man who has become so merged and one with his God that the character of that God is reflected in and through the man. Be imitators of us and of the Lord. Follow me as I follow Christ.

For Paul, it was not even a hitch or a hesitation. It was one and the same thing. But who of us would dare speak with the same audacity? And yet the remarkable thing is, God would have us, so to speak.

And speak it in truth as the foundational fact of our lives. And just as in this and all other things that God has been speaking in these nights, he's seeking for an elevation of our whole perspective of his intention rather than on that much lesser thing that we have satisfied ourselves with, which somehow is more in keeping with the moderate Christian view of Christian respectability and acceptability, but falls beneath the standard of God's glory and God's holiness. I was reminded even tonight before I got up here of a scripture quoted from reality.

Be holy as your Father in heaven is holy. Be perfect as he is perfect. How we tend to disregard or think, well, that's a kind of hyperbolic statement.

It's an exaggerated thing. It's something perhaps to aim at but not to attain. If that's what your faith is, you'll not attain it.

But there's a God that would have us to attain it. And I hope I'm not preceding myself to say that God is waiting for the day when the church in all its full orbitness can stand before the world and say to it, as Jesus said to his own generation, if you see me, you see the Father. What we will be saying is, if you see me, you see the Lord.

I and the Lord am one. His character is my character. The imitators of us and of the Lord is both one and the same thing.

And then Paul celebrates in verse 9 how they themselves report about what kind of a reception we had with you and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and a true God and to wait for a son from heaven whom you raised from the dead, that is, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. My God,

give us hearing ears that this is not just, what shall I say, posy. This isn't apostolic flourish.

These are awesome statements that these are not just men who have accepted Jesus, who have made a decision. They have been turned, powerfully wrenched, broken out of a pagan, self-seeking, freshly sensual, historic, powerful, time-honored, generational orbit to serve the living God, to be servants unto the living God. This isn't just accepting the Lord or even salvation, as we have been familiar with the word, but the profoundest kind of conversion, which is another testimony to the depth and the quality of the kind of proclamation that they heard from Paul in spirit and in power, in full conviction, just as you know what manner of men we prove to be among you.

There's the testimony. There's the evidence. They were not just lightly saved.

They were not going to go on just hanging in by their teeth and their fingernails in a kind of carnal, no-man's land of backslidenness. They were turned from idols to serve the living God. Word to God that that were a statement of the converts of our own generation, and to wait for his Son from heaven, well, waiting itself, and to have this kind of expectancy of the things that we spoke about last week, that apocalyptic view, the sense of the imminence of things that are at hand, at the door, soon to break in, the coming of the Lord.

To wait for that is not just the twiddling of the thumbs. It's occupying while you wait, but it's a tension of expectancy that even these early converts were immediately inducted into, understood and lived by. That's remarkable.

We need to understand the depth of their conversion and how they appropriated the whole fullness of the apostolic view because it was a word that came to them in power and the spirit, in full conviction, just as you know, as we prove to be, what manner of men we prove to be among you. And then Paul says in chapter 2 and verse 3, For our exhortation did not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God. I almost have to pause.

Wipe the saliva. The juices flow when you hear statements like this. Not as pleasing men, but God.

Separate unto me. They keep going back again, echoing back again the point of our beginning in Acts 13, the apostolic point of beginning. Separate unto me.

Not unto men, not unto need even. Unto me. And if I didn't say it before, I want to go on record now.

That if we are going to be attenuated to need at the end times, if we're going to be moved by every need, and I tell you that they're multitudinous, we will have a kind of ministry that might ameliorate some human needs, but it will not be a ministry unto him. And not to be a ministry unto him is not to be in the power and in the spirit and in the full conviction. Paul's ministry was an enormous blessing to these ex-pagans from Thessalonica because it was not as pleasing men, but as pleasing God.

We've got an orbit ourselves to be broken from and to be radically turned to from man-pleasingness to God-pleasingness, which itself is a statement of apostolic character. Are you there? Are you a man-pleaser or a God-pleaser? You say, you have pleased us in these days. That's not because my intention was to please you.

My intention was to please him, and in pleasing him, you've been pleased. The whole tenor of the world is this syrupy man-pleasing sentiment, and we hear it in the voices of our pastors, and we see it everywhere about us. That's why Paul was approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, not something to be bandied about, not a cheap little thing that he employs at his will to facilitate his ministry, to be entrusted.

The very vocabulary of Paul opens up a whole perspective that either he's deranged and out of it and peculiar in his whole perception, or we are vastly from the normative place that God intends for the church. For his exhortation did not come from error or impurity or the way of deceit, with regard that that were a statement today of every ministry. I wrote at the bottom of my Bible, how many of us who would be scandalized to be found in error are not as much affected or concerned about impurity or deceit.

We want to be doctrinally correct, but are we as concerned to be free from impurity or deceit or guile or subtlety or manipulation or the use of your voice to evoke certain responses? Paul's word was pure, both in the word itself and in the spirit of the speaking. Nothing was insinuated with it. There was no self-serving end that was threaded through that redounded to him.

It was a ministry unto God who entrusted him with the gospel. And isn't it a remarkable thing that he says in verse 8, having thus a fond affection for you? My God, how does a Jew come to a fond affection for ex-pagan Gentiles from Greece? And he's not just a wolfen. This isn't just a little sentimental aside.

This is not a condescension to men. Paul doesn't know what condescension to men is. It's a genuine fondness.

And elsewhere here he talks about mothering them and lavishing love upon them, even giving them his own life as well as the gospel. He wasn't just an agent for the dissemination of the gospel, some kind of impersonal instrument that God employs to bring the word where it's needed. He was a living, palpitating, feeling, loving man who brooded over the souls to whom he was brought.

He was not just an antiseptic disseminator. He was incarnate, a flesh-encased piece of heaven. He was the humanity coupled with God, which was the message itself.

And disarmed these pagans from their enmity and suspicion of a Jew who would approach them with a word that was totally alien in terms of their whole consideration and culture. To be such a one. And yet the remarkable emphasis in our own generation is ministry, ministry, ministry.

What's your ministry, brother? What's your calling, brother? What are you doing? And you shall be witnesses unto me. Never occurs to us. We somehow think that was an error somewhere in transmission and that what it really should read is, and you shall do witnessing for me.

You shall be witnesses unto me. The greatest witness unto Jesus Christ is the character of a people who are like him. The doing will come of itself.

What kind of character did Paul display to a people of whom he says in verse 8 that he imparted not only the gospel but also our own lives. Working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaim to you the gospel of God. I want to tell you, it's not that working night and day we then proclaimed.

Working night and day was the proclamation of the gospel as well as the gospel itself. It was the statement of the kingdom. It was a demonstration of a man who wanted to be free from all deceit and all error, all

misapprehension, not in any way having to look to the saints to sustain him as if something could be said about his reputation or his character, that he was in this for a money-making purpose or to advance his own ends.

How could that ever be conceived? Working with his hands even to sustain those who will wish him night and day proclaiming the gospel. So please, let's remove the separation, the artificial distinction between working night and day and proclaiming the gospel. Working night and day was a proclamation, was a statement, was a testimony, was the very thing fleshed out and set before these people to fulfill and confirm the words that they heard.

And that's what's been lacking in our generation. We've been hearing correct things, technically correct things, but we have not seen the conjunction between correct things and the correct life. And I think it's got everything to do with the issue of power.

And I'm almost suspicious to see what purports to be a demonstration of power without the appropriate and seemingly apostolic character. In fact, I can put you on alert that that will be the very deception of the end times. Signs and wonders, deceiving signs and wonders, lying miracles, not that people will not be healed, not that there will not be authentic power being displayed, but what will be conspicuously absent is appalling character, apostolic integrity, apostolic meekness, apostolic quality of life.

You'll see hot shots, lots of bravado and slapdash and great celebration of themselves and people loving it, diamond studded rings and \$300 suits, men of faith and power, but you'll not see apostolic character. I'm suspicious, God help me if I'm leaning too deeply here, to see the lack of conjunction between character and power, charisma and power and character. You are witnesses, he says in verse 10, and so is God.

Here again Paul, always living in the consciousness of a God who sees all things and before whom everything is transparent. How devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behave toward you believers. You know what the beauty of this is? I don't think that Paul ever imagined when he had this letter written that that was one day going to become part of the holy writ, the scriptures.

This is a piece of artlessness. This is a man who's just writing out of his heart. This is a man reminding the Thessalonians what happened when he came, what they perceived and reminding them by that to be imitators of him and at the same time imitators and followers of the Lord.

You are witnesses and so is God. In the mouth of two witnesses it is established. I can say that with complete audacity, without a tremor of vacillation in my voice, with, gee, is it so or not, with complete certitude, and you are witnesses and so is God.

You know how blamelessly and uprightly we behave toward you believers, imploring each one of you as a father would his own children so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. Here's one of the greatest, most powerful incentives for apostolic character, for integrity, for meekness, for purity of life, that you may walk worthy, in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. This is more than Christian respectability.

This is more than keeping your nose clean. This is more than avoiding conspicuous sin or allowing yourself the certain luxury of modest backsliding from time to time. It's the incentive of walking in keeping with the character of God's kingdom and God's glory.

And the fact that this was not just a mere phrase for Paul, a mere piece of eloquence, that it was the abiding fact was demonstrated by the character of his own walk. Follow me, imitate me and the Lord. You like this? I love it.

I'm so far from this. I'm embarrassed. I'm ashamed to be standing here as if my speaking is the statement that indeed I've arrived at these very things because look at the anointing and the authority of which this man speaks.

But I'll tell you that the greatest deception for men like myself and you also is to think that the anointing that attends our ministry is a statement of the approval of God upon our life, our conduct and our character. It has nothing to do with it. A. A. Allen was anointed by God to the day of his death.

I don't know that he ever had a meeting in which people were not powerfully delivered and saved but he died an alcoholic. But he was anointed. They had to carry him up to the platform and steady him sometimes in order for him to preach.

And the anointing was always on his preaching but not on his life. Well, we're impressed. There were people delivered and saved but what might have been the fuller, deeper, more penetrating internal value of that work if his character was consonant with his ministry.

I don't want to be satisfied. I love the anointing of God. My God, I wouldn't dare come off the seat to stand if we were not there.

But to have his anointing on your life as well as on your ministry is supremely and ultimately the apostolic statement to which God calls an apostolic church. Why is God celebrating all this tonight? Not to celebrate Paul or to give us wistful reminiscence of what once was in the early church but to raise for us the standard to which he would draw us now that the church at the end of the age might be as glorious as the church at the commencement of the age. That the men who stand as our foundation the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone do not just serve us the doctrines of apostolicity but that their foundation was their life and their character, their model and their example follow me, imitate me as the Lord.

That you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory and not into the Lutheran denomination and not into the charismatic movements and not into the assemblies of God and not into so and so's ministry into the kingdom and the glory of God. Hallelujah. You'll never walk worthy.

You'll never walk like this except with that conscious understanding and motivation. Well, praise the Lord. Can I turn you to Acts 20, Paul's farewell address? Lord, help me from breaking up and not crying over this.

Here too, Paul didn't premeditate what his final remarks would be to men with whom he labored and to whom he poured out his life in Ephesus when he called for the elders of the church bound in the spirit going to Jerusalem knowing that trials and afflictions waited him there and that he didn't have the time to stop but he sent for them, it says in Acts 20.

He called to them and it says in the 17th verse and from the latest he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church and when they had come to them, he said to them, dot, dot, dot he called to them and when they had come to him no ifs, no ands, no buts no question about, well, hey, Paul, don't you

recognize that the Greyhound bus isn't running and that there's a strike at the airport or there's a fuel crisis or we have to go by mule or donkey or walk that Miletus is not just around the corner that this is going to be a sacrifice and an exertion maybe even a peril or a danger he called for them, they came he said, boy, this guy must have really cracked a whip not at all he was cherished, he was esteemed he was loved because he set before them not only the doctrines but the

awesome reality of the living God in his own person he demonstrated what our God is to the Goyim, to the Gentiles to the castaways, to those whom the Jews had despised at whose homes they could not even enter to eat he called and when they had come to him, he said to them now we're going to read it, unpremeditated, just out of the heart praise God for a Luke who records this for us how does it begin? verse 18 when they had come to him, he said to them you yourselves know from the first day that I set foot in Asia how I was with you the whole time from the first day, you know from the first day until the time I left how I was with you the whole time you know what manner of man that I was with you from the first and remain to be so long as you knew me one consistent, unchanging thing how do

you like that for consistency? let's call it apostolic consistency no rising and falling of moods no up days and down days good moods, bad moods no being eloquent at the pulpit and then smiling afterwards you know what manner of man I proved to be with you from the first day to the last I was one consistent thing through and through serving the Lord, not men serving the Lord with all humility I remember picking up a brother's writing about the tabernacle of David and he had one phrase that leaped right off the page and struck my heart it will never cease resounding he said, apostolic meekness with all humility and yet this is a man commanding men, giving orders beseeching, imploring, calling them to go do this, do that taking up sums of money for the aid of the church in Jerusalem

warning, rebuking exhorting, threatening, must I come to you if my apostles are not, must I come in my own bodily presence, serving the Lord with all humility somehow there is a conjunction between humility and authority that was true of Moses it was true of Jesus, it needs to be true of us learn of me, take my yoke upon you for I am gentle and lowly I am meek and lowly of spirit learn of me, Paul evidently did and you know what God has been breaking in my heart in these days, you haven't done this art you leaped over the gospel foundations the teachings of Christ, the doctrines of Christ the example of Christ, the sermon on the mount the being holy, the being perfect, you leaped over and you've graduated yourself into the apostolic things you thought that the gospel was kid stuff

preliminary, and you wanted to swim in the headier things of the Pauline epistles and the apostolic writings, but where does one learn of him, and how does one obtain what is gentle and lowly and meek except by that yoke and except by that union and except by that relationship God has just sent two brothers to me one from New Zealand and one from Africa by way of Switzerland to say the same thing, immerse yourself in Jesus meditate upon his word upon his way, upon his example learn of him that you might be like him and as these men were ministering to me something leaped into my own understanding I who have spoken four powerful tapes on the subject of false apostolicity and have warned the church everywhere to beware of false apostles, for if we lose the authenticity of that word, we lose

everything and in danger of becoming one myself what is the danger? leaping over the foundation that is in Jesus, in his life in his character, in his example in his doctrines, and going directly in to the apostolic swim learning to be conversant with the heady phrases and missing the foundation that can only be laid in Christ, for on no other foundation can any man build but Christ Jesus and I'm wondering if this is just a defect with me, or is this shared in the large church and now he says in verse 22 bound in spirit and mind

my way to Jerusalem not knowing what will happen to me there except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city saying that bonds and afflictions await me but I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself in order that I might finish

my course in the ministry which I receive from the Lord Jesus to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God I love these references of Paul the gospel of the grace of God my gospel he says there is such a sense of endearment there is such a sense of the gospel as being something profoundly personal to Paul it's not just a collection of doctrines that are correct that needs to be promulgated to the unsaved it's something dear, it's something intimate it's something that's writ in his own life at the very foundations of his own being it's the gospel of the grace of God who took a murderer and a persecutor and made him the chief apostle to the church who took a proud rabbinical pharisaical character and made him the apostle to the goyim, to the gentiles he knows the gospel of the

grace of God really knows it that's why he can say my gospel it's not a formula, it's an intimate revelation of the genius of God as was revealed in Christ Jesus taken into the life of a man that becomes his foundation so he's bound in the spirit he doesn't know what's going to happen to me he doesn't have to know because what happens to him is completely incidental it's a secondary matter he's been warned that trials and tribulations await him there but I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself for whom else then is it dear? can we say that tonight? don't answer me, but let's contemplate this rhetorical question r-h-e-t-o-r-i-c-a-l what does that mean, rhetorical? it means it's a question raised not to be instantly answered, but to be considered can we say that I do not

consider my life as dear unto myself what then have we been pampering and powdering and treating with such elaborate concern and attention why then are we so fearful for our own insecurity or future he doesn't know what's going to happen to him there he doesn't have to know he goes not knowing, just like Abraham when he was called went forth not knowing, doesn't have to know what's the difference, whether it's this manner or that what detail of that, whether you're shot or whether you're going to be drowned or burned at the stake or be set free or go on or be cut short everything is in the hands of him with whom he has to do the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ you could do nothing to me except it were given you from above Jesus said and Paul believed and such a man can walk through

the world freely and even go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem not knowing and it's all the same because he does not hold his life as dear unto himself he's one who's been brought back from the dead no longer to live unto himself but for God, a servant no wonder that such a man can convert Thessalonians from their idols to serve the living God and not count their lives as dear unto themselves all the freedom of not counting your life as dear to yourself but as dear unto him who gave it don't give me this women's lip stuff and this abortion stuff and it's our body and we'll do with our pregnancies what we will whoever said it's your body it's God's who gave it who drew you from your mother's womb for his purposes and we should not hold our life as dear unto ourselves but unto him who gave

it for his eternal and glorious purposes my God if there's any one thing calculated to break the power of our mundane and ordinary Christian I almost said Lutheran living it's that to know that we were called out of our mother's wombs that we've got the wart in this place and that color hair and this makeup and disposition and frame because of the design of God for an expressed explicit purpose pertaining to his kingdom and his glory that we shouldn't hold this life as dear unto ourselves what a freedom he who seeks his life will lose it but he who loses it for my sake will find it and this like so many other of the teachings or the doctrines of Christ we've heard, we've read and we've passed over and we're graduating to apostolic

things and we need to go back to the milk of that word and

the foundation that is to be found in Christ and do it what a freedom which is reflected further in verse 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God I don't care whether you liked it or you didn't like it there are the good parts you liked the faith, the prosperity, the health, you liked that part but the cross, the suffering the suffering that remains you didn't like but it didn't in any way affect him in proclaiming the whole counsel of God you got the good parts and the not so good you ate the whole lamb roasted with fire you didn't just pick at the dainties he wasn't turned away because your face changed and your expression changed and you began to shrink back when he gave you some hard things about the necessity of suffering he gave the whole counsel of

God I did not shrink that's the freedom of a man who does not hold his life as dear to himself and of course if his life is not dear to himself what shall we say of his reputation once you've come to that fundamental ground of what shall you be afraid of what shall you be compromised imagine a whole church like this my God the world would have to stand up and take notice that to be free in Christ is free indeed so he commends them to the word of his grace which is able to build you up saying in verse 33 I've coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes you yourselves know that these hands minister to my own needs and the men who are with me in everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus here we go again he

himself said it is more blessed to give than to receive he is not just a man who parrots gospel statements but that he has so thoroughly internalized them and taken them into himself that it's reflected in his conduct, his character and his life it's a standard to which God calls us you yourself know in everything I showed you I demonstrated I didn't just verbally make the statement based on the words of Jesus I worked with my hands to help the weak and when he had said these things he knelt down and prayed with them all and they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul and repeatedly kissed him everything must have broken loose in heaven the angels must have been freaking out falling all over themselves to see the sight of this Jew being kissed by these Gentiles falling all over him

and weeping him and loving him and bathing him in their tears because they knew and grieved especially over the word which he had spoken that they should see his face no more there's nothing impersonal about this he's not just some winged disseminator he's not the guy who bruises into the Holiday Inn and speaks that night at your big meeting and then runs off with the offering there's something profoundly personal there's a love, his life was given he was a demonstration as well as a proclamation of the God who had come to them in an incarnate way in this man grieving that they should see his face no more I forgot what time I started so I don't know how long I should go on when you start yawning I'll stop just looking at notes now to be reminded of the one true thing that Paul was day in

and day out in season and out consistently one thing you know what manner of man I was among you and God knows there's one explanation only for the phenomenon of Paul it's the continuation of the crucified and resurrected Christ if we attribute the glory of Paul was to Paul we miss the whole thing we're guilty again of celebrating a man rather than the God that that man reflected and we love to do that we love to think that our pastors are somehow super spiritual, we can relax in our carnality they somehow have a mystique, a pastoral mystique and that's why of course they're required to maintain a certain distance lest you see the flaws and the cracks and the same kinds of struggles through which you're passing but if we can keep them in that kind of celebrated mystique of a super

spirituality which we can't hope to attain because we're only the laity we perpetuate a filthy and vile system that has kept us from the apostolic reality in our own time Paul is the foundation of a church but the church must be like him or it is not apostolic and what's the key? it's the continuation of the crucified and resurrected Christ it's death that worketh in me, Paul says for me to live as Christ, in him I move and live and I have my being in him, in him, in him is the most frequent phrase of Paul if we attribute to Paul's genius his distinction or to Paul's Jewishness or to his brilliance or to his Jewish upbringing or to his education, to his intellect anything that has redounded to the church we have missed it those are the very things he comes and has done that he might win

Christ that he might know him and make him known why have we not stumbled upon this stupefying requirement to live the crucified and the resurrected life because we have lived beneath the apostolic level because there's nothing in the character of our modern Lutheran, charismatic, Pentecostal, evangelical and fundamental Christianity that requires of us such a quality of conduct and life that would make us aware that we must be in him, or we of all men are most to be pitied because our present Christian life is so timid, so unrequiring so established in a cycle of services and dollar in the collection plate responses that you don't need the power of the resurrection life to perform it you could be a nice guy and relatively ethical and moral and get by and if I were to hoist the national

motto of the United States it's not in God we trust, it's get by I had seven years as a high school teacher and I know every year, every semester how many students would come up to my desk, Mr.

Katz and say, what's the minimum amount we need to do in order to get by they're only reflecting their parents who have lived in a get by Christianity all their life long we're going to need the power that Paul knew the fullness of that life if we're going to move into this apostolic realm and to the degree that we will, we will find elicited and provoked against us reaction rebuke, persecution confrontation all the more reason for moving in the power of that life is our gospel going forth in the power of the spirit and in full conviction I'll leave that with you as another rhetorical question but just consider as I've mentioned before what the character is of modern gospel proclamation are you saved, will you accept Jesus think of the benefits that will accrue to you health, prosperity

this is wrong, that's wrong, accept Jesus it will all be turned right is somehow another kind of gospel another kind of motivation, another kind of appeal and that kind of appeal so ensconced in the spirit of the world in the egocentric interests of men does not have to come in the power of the spirit and in full conviction knowing what manner of men we were among you it can come in a flashy way through a supercilious character with his fingers loaded with rings promulgating a message of accept but we're not going to see men turn to serve the living God our standards have fallen wretchedly we are content if men will only accept Christ and then continue to attend Christian services it's a kind of statistical Christianity about how many decisions have been made of men who yet remain pagan

still remain in the world, still loving the things of the world for none of these things move me for I do not count my life as dear unto myself none of these things move me show me a man who's not moved by things and I'll show you an apostolic man love not the world nor the things that are in the world and I'll tell you, have they ever gotten slick have they ever gotten chromed and polished and sophisticated and alluring they smell good, look good they appeal to every sense in us Paul was not moved by any thing there's only one thing that moved Paul it was the spirit of the living God whose servant he was there's a certain sense of apostolic selflessness an abandonment to the purposes of God a mindlessness about one's security one's condition, one's pleasure it doesn't matter, it's all

the same none of these things move me none of these things to touch the world and to use what's needful and yet not to be moved by it not to be impressed by its fashions and its fads not to palpitate for the latest design I am amazed, 57 years of watching the rise and fall, the jerks, the liftings and strings of tightening the cuffs and loosing them of raising the hem and lowering it of this variation and that and watching the saps like flies fall by the ton to have the latest thing moved by the thing such a one will never be bound in the spirit going toward Jerusalem, not knowing neither count I my life dear to myself this is a heavenly man finishing the ministry given to him from the Lord we need to begin it in a character in keeping with the call walking worthy in the manner of him who

called us to his kingdom and to his glory I am not going to finish this either in one night he was therefore now conviction no condemnation but conviction to those who are on Christ Jesus praise God for his convicting spirit praise him for setting a standard above what we have thought to consider who are so pleased with ourselves after all we have avoided conspicuous sin we have not fornicated, we have not committed adultery, we have not stolen but where it said be perfect, we just kind of took that with a grain of salt where it said if you seek your life you will loose it but if you loose it for my sake you will find it we didn't really deeply regard and take in to our spirit and believe and do what that word said we went on beyond Christ without having his doctrines deeply internalized

into our being and his example and his meekness forged in our character by union with him in obedience to the word which he spoke I want to pray for that kind of revival, that kind of restoration that kind of character, what a precious standard praise God that we have a scripture that is not just a fiction, it's not just an imagined artistic rendering of what some writer supposed a figure like a fictional Paul might have been this was a flesh and blood man like as we his stomach rumbled when he was hungry just as we, fasting was as costly for him as for us, denial was the cross as for us, but he bore it and he suffered it because he did not count his life as dear unto himself he cherished the gospel of the grace of God he knew himself to be profoundly a murderer and a persecutor saved and

profoundly turned by a Christ who appeared to him in the way may that revelation come to an unwary world today through us who have this character established in us may it come to me, let's pray precious God Jesus, we talked about our repenting earlier tonight and Lord we do we repent for being content to be nice guys as if being a nice guy somehow fulfilled the requirement of God we repent that we may the Christian respectability and the absence of conspicuous sin to be somehow the fulfillment of your intention for the saints we repent that we have celebrated Paul and celebrated certain men of God as if somehow they should be in a super spiritual category but after all we're just pew sitters, we're just laity we're just humdrums, we're just the workaday world certainly don't expect that

of us, do you? when you said if any man would come after me you cannot be my disciple except we thought somehow it would refer to another we've given our mouths to scorning and to railing we have disdained and we've had content we've spoken in unseemly ways we've not kept our hold on our spirit we've taken liberties in our conduct, our speaking, our thought life we've allowed ourselves indulgence in the things that are private and personal that we didn't think anyone else saw or knew that we could enjoy because somehow maybe God didn't see either or if he did, it didn't really matter we've sinned against the body of Christ because we thought that our sins did not affect the whole body and that a little leaven does corrupt the lump, precious God help me help us, Lord help us to the grace

of which Paul spoke that we might know the gospel of his grace because you set a standard that is holy that we should be like you give us the grace to attain it give us the grace to repent, my God for being

satisfied with a lesser standard restore again apostolic character to an apostolic church that you might restore with it the power of the spirit unto full conviction to the turning of men from their filthy modern day idols to serve the living God and we will profoundly and continually thank you and give you the praise the honor and the glory for so high a great calling in Christ Jesus and God's people said, Amen

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