

Apostolic Vision - Part 1

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the urgent need for the church to reclaim its apostolic and prophetic foundations in a world rife with idolatry and spiritual complacency.

Duration: 1:12:20

Scripture: Acts 16:16

Topics: "Apostolic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the seriousness of the current times and the need for revival in the church. The speaker mentions a three-week trip where they were the focal point, and expresses the desire for the juices or sap of God's presence to flow. They pray for the people to hear God's voice and for their faith to be quickened. The speaker also highlights the importance of the church being called to something momentous and ultimate, and the need for every member to function in their calling for the life of God to flow effectively.

Transcript

I feel and sense and agree with Wayne about the high seriousness of these days. It was clear from the moment that I leaped out of bed one morning that these days had to be inserted between two prophetic schools that we're conducting up in northern Minnesota, where we should ordinarily be drawing a breath and relaxing between these two enormous commitments. The Lord has inserted this three-week trip by car, with the air conditioner out, and that you were the focal point of these entire three weeks.

We've appended other things along the way, other stops, but these four days were always from the first, clearly central to this whole trip that's being made. Well, Wayne heard a series of messages called true apostolicity. Leave it to me to take apostolic and make it apostolicity, and I'm afraid you may be hearing it again in these days, because nothing has changed in the burden that I bear.

I'm jealous over these two great words, apostolic and prophetic, for the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, and I stand like a watchdog over both words lest they suffer loss in our generation where they're becoming almost a commonplace. I become a little bit alarmed when we've come to a season where to be a prophet is to become popular and to be sought after, and I'm wondering what that phenomenon means. It's not part of my own experience.

So, I know that you have a serious intention with God, and therefore these foundations are important to you, and I don't know how the Lord is going to unfold them in these days, but I think he's given me a point of beginning in Acts 17. One single episode in the apostolic life, and one episode says all. I hope this doesn't sound disrespectful, but somebody once said, no matter where you slice through the bologna, it's still bologna.

You can take it from the end or the middle, it doesn't matter. It's the same consistent thing throughout. So also the apostolic life.

And so we could have chosen at random any episode from the life of Paul, and in it would have been revealed the quintessential elements of apostolicity. What is an apostle is more than a passing curiosity for us, for we are to be raised on that foundation, whatever that foundation is. Our superstructure and what we ourselves are is kindred to it and like unto it, and there is no other foundation.

And I like it best when something happens that is unplanned, that simply happens so to speak of itself, where the man has hardly time to collect his thoughts. Something like our own arrival here, coming out of Sacramento in the days that have preceded it, day by day, and to find all of a sudden you're on. And what you are in God, what has been formed, is what is expressed.

And that's what an apostle is. And that's what an apostolic church is. It is the thing in itself.

It's not the taking on concepts and doctrines or peculiar interests. It's something through and through. It's what has been formed in God, and is the very expression of God, who is the high priest and the apostle of our confession.

So I'm trusting that these words are going to be elevated in your own consciousness. I'm often fond of saying that if you hear the word apostolic and prophetic, and you don't salivate, you've not yet really been apprehended by the meaning of those words. The juices or the sap ought to flow.

And if it doesn't, it's an embarrassing statement of some inadequacy in us, where we have just made them a concept, and have not laid hold yet of the actuality. So let's pray as we embark on our four nights together, and with this point of beginning. So Lord, we just look to you again, the God of resurrection, who is our life, our utterance, our wisdom, our speaking, and that this people will hear your voice, my God.

And their faith will be quickened, not only to hear, but to see demonstration of the authentic thing, my God, to which we are called, that has lain in such disuse, and has been virtually set aside, my God, only as a concept and a formalism, and needs be revived in these last days for the great weight that shall fall upon the church in the last and concluding days. So Lord, we're asking mercy, we're asking grace upon grace, we're asking truth, we're asking revelation, we're asking event, Lord. We're asking largely, and we're not naive, and we understand that to whom much is given, much is also required, and yet we're asking much.

Come Lord, and charge these days with such a fullness, grant such a requirement, let there be such a calling, let there be such a formation of something for this people, my God, that will redound even unto eternity, and bless us, and grant us your heart, and the sense of it. We thank you, Lord, as we look to you now. Our ears are open, my God, and our hearts also.

Speak, for your servants are hearing, and we thank you and give you the praise for the privilege of these days, in Jesus' holy name, and God's people said, Amen. Well, you're probably familiar with this episode that begins with Paul in flight, around verse 16, or 15, or 14, and then immediately the brethren sent away

Paul to go as it were to the sea, but Silas and Timothy abode there still, and they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens, and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy for to come to him with all speed, they departed. So here's Paul brought to Athens that was not on his schedule, something extemporaneous, something that just rose out of the circumstances of that time, in flight from persecution, and a temporary and unplanned stop in Athens, and that's what makes this so juicy.

What does a man do when he finds himself in a place that he had not planned to be, and there begins to be an unfolding of something from God, and what does he do in that, and what does he reveal in that is what the man himself is. So now while Paul waited in verse 16 for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. So the point of beginning, as every great apostolic event, is God's spirit in a man's spirit.

His spirit within him was stirred as he saw. So here's a conjunction of the humanity of Paul as keen observer whose eyes are opened wide, and the spirit of God having opportunity to break something upon Paul's spirit as he sees the city wholly given to idolatry. And that's what Athens is.

Though it stands as the epitome of civilization, the high watermark of humanism, a philosophy of the highest quality of human pursuit, Paul nevertheless was not impressed with that. He was impressed with idolatry, that is everything standing as substitute for God. And you don't have to go to Athens to behold this phenomenon.

You can go to Reno. You can go to Lake Tahoe. You can go to Truckee.

Is there any city or town in the world today that is exempt from the things for which Paul winced then? The answer is no. The only question is how is it that we are not wincing? How is it that we are not so finely honed as to sense the same acuity and grief as God in seeing the kinds of things upon which the Lord looks daily? That's the difference between where we are and where Paul was and where we ourselves need to be. What do they say that you can put a frog in a kettle of cold water and just by the gradation of heat he finally comes to a place where he's cooked, but he never knew at what point that transition came.

So also we, day by day, are exposed to the world, its spirit, its wisdom, its tenor, its TV, the whole kind of thing that makes up the normative lifestyle. And we become so attenuated to that that we no longer wince if ever we did. In fact, let's forget about wincing.

When's the last time we blushed? Blushing is a lost art. But I can yet remember it from my youth. But there's not many present indications of a people capable of blushing, let alone wincing.

So what shall we say but what the Scripture says, keep your hearts with all diligence, for out of it are all the issues of life. Maybe what we need to do is perform a little radical separation from the kinds of things that have dulled our senses and our ability to perceive and to observe. Oh, I can give you so many illustrations.

And every one of them will make me to appear as a freak. As, for example, coming apart on the platform of a Pentecostal church in Denmark, and foaming at the mouth, and almost falling off the platform with my upset at something that the whole rest of the congregation was celebrating, namely the moving to another locality of one of its elders who had received a promotion in his work that required his move to another place. And the church was sending them with their blessings and approving and applauding that departure.

I know you're looking at me blankly, wondering why I should in any way be grieved over that. Should I not also have celebrated a man enjoying a promotion? And the answer is no, a thousand times no. That what was happening was that the fabric of the body of Christ in that locality was being rent, that a man in leadership placed there by the Spirit of God was being removed, not by the Lord who is the head over the church and who establishes the steps of the righteous, but by the business community.

And what is most grievous of all is that the church was applauding and commemorating that act with celebration. How little did it mean to them, and how little did they sense the rent of a man being moved out from the organic matrix of the body of Christ because the body of Christ was to them only phraseology. Promotion was much more substantial, and everyone shared the values implicit in worldly promotion to the point of celebration.

Only one freak was frothing at the mouth and upset over the entire thing, and particularly the church's commendation of that, and that was me. If you're going to wince and to grieve at cities wholly given to idolatry, of necessity you're going to have to become much more freaky than you presently are. In fact, before the Lord's finished with you through me, you're going to have no alternative but to becoming pilgrim strangers and sojourners in the earth, which I may have requested when I was here the last time.

But were you sincere when you confessed that, and have you been holding fast that confession, or slowly falling back into the vortex of the world, its wisdom and unquestioned premises and false values to which the whole world subscribes as if they were both normal and true? You know what apostolic is? Apostolic is a sore point of dissension and confrontation that is out of tune and out of joint with the world, its spirit, its mentality, and its wisdom. It is perfectly ungainly. It is agitated through and through, and it can't keep its mouth shut.

And the very next word, after Paul's spirit being grieved in him as he saw the city wholly given to idolatry is, therefore. There's a consequence when a godly man's spirit winces. God does not just give that for his own discomfort.

It's set in motion, at the beginning of something that constitutes divine act. But it begins with the work of the spirit of God in the spirit of a man whose eyes are open to see as God sees. And if that's your condition, you may find yourself fleeing from persecution also.

For that formula, that mentality, that constitution will make you a candidate not only to be opposed, but to be persecuted. It calls for it. It's the inevitable consequence of apostolic living, how wise we are to avoid it and be charismatic only.

I love Paul, don't you? Oh, what a mensch. You know what that word means? Solid through and through. Single-eyed, uncompromising.

Therefore, disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews. Are you following the spiritual logic of this? A man sees a city wholly given to idolatry and therefore he disputes in the synagogue with the Jews? What has the one got to do with the other? What does idolatry have to do with estimable religion? And the answer is everything. Whether it's the synagogue of the Jews or the synagogue of the Gentiles, called the Christian Church.

Their idolatry is most rife. R-I-F-E. But not recognized as that.

You have to pray for me. I am really in the process of greater and greater derangement. Poor Ingers had to suffer the embarrassment of such a husband for years and it's not getting better.

But you know the impression I had in recent weeks? I knew about Mormonism, and I knew about Jehovah's Witnesses, and I knew about other cults and sects and deceptions of one form or another. But the thing that struck me one moment, I don't know how it came, I was probably looking out on a congregation, when the thought came that you can be as effectually deceived in an orthodox Christian setting, subscribing to orthodox views and giving assent to orthodox doctrine as you could become deceived by subscribing to something off the wall. Deception is the issue of the heart, and you can do it just as profoundly with legitimate and orthodox doctrine as you can with the wild-haired things that constitute the belief of sects.

And that's why it says examine yourself to see whether you're in the faith is more than the issue of subscribing to the correctness of its doctrines. There's an authenticity that God is after, and it's something through and through, and in fact to be merely satisfied with doctrinal assent is already deception. To think that if you verbalize or give assent mentally to that which is correct, that that makes you correct, is already to be deceived.

So therefore he disputed in the synagogues with the Jews. He went right to the jugular vein. And I'll tell you with all due respect, what shall we say about Judaism? I so appreciate Walter Martin's book on the kingdom of the cults.

My only question is why he left out the two greatest, Catholicism and Judaism. In fact, is there any ism that is not cultic, that is not made of man? The very suffix "-ism", indicates that its origin is from below rather than above. How come you have been so condescending to Judaism and to the synagogues and to the Jews? Because you don't see as Paul sees.

Because you are outwardly impressed with the things that are external. Because a Jew who gives the appearance, and very impressively, of being ethically and morally correct and humane and all of the things in which we Jews are so good, is for you so impressive that you would never raise the issue of their conversion. Though the word says, there is not a righteous man upon the face of the earth that doeth good and sinneth not, yet your eye says, here is a man who looks eminently good.

And that's why God has placed that people in the midst of us everywhere. To see whether we are obedient to the word of God, or whether we will be impressed by externalities of which Judaism is enormously impressive. Paul was not content even to tolerate its existence, but disputed within it.

And I believe that before the age ends, this dispute is going to be again, quickened. Oh, I don't want to get off on a side eddy or let you think that I am occupied with some issue about the Jews because I myself am Jewish. But I want to say, if you can hear it, that the issue of the Jew is the issue of the gospel.

That there is nothing that more confronts the truth of the gospel than this people who have been so historically and formidably opposed to it, that Paul is not short of saying in Romans 11, they are the enemies of the gospel for your sake. To confront the Jew with the gospel is to confront the world head on. For we Jews are eminently at the center of the world and are its prime architects and movers.

Take away your Jewish Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx's and Albert Einstein's and Oppenheimer's and all the rest and Steven Spielberg's and what do you have left that you can call modern western civilization?

We are more Jewish than we know and more of you have reflected spark in the raising of your children than you have the book of Proverbs and spark is Jewish. What I'll tell you to confront them is no small thing. You want to know what the gospel is in power? Then go to the Jew first and then to the Greek.

And we've never had that revelation because we have sidestepped that most demanding requirement that God himself has placed in his own divine priority to the Jew first and also to the Greek. I think I must have terrified any number of Christians who would have thought to approach me 30 or more years ago. Talk about formidable.

Talk about breathing fire. Talk about breathing slaughterings and looking upon the church not as some harmless innocuous thing that we can afford to tolerate but the very deterrent to the progress of mankind. And that would be better off extirpating and rooting out that antiquated old wives tale phenomenon than allowing it to continue.

We're not just idle village atheists. We're vicious. And we're going to see this spirit revived again of diabolical hatred for the church.

Particularly that church that presses the issue of God upon the consciousness of men. And will not go along with an increasing ecumenical religious and political formula for the happiness of mankind but stubbornly insist on the requirement of the gospel and the word and the truth of God like Paul. Pluralism was not in Paul's vocabulary.

He would not have been tolerant with other world faiths and world cultures and the kind of mentality in which we're being inducted. He would have seen right through them for the demonic phenomenon that they are that need to be confronted, exposed and dealt with. Only we are soft saps.

And it's for that reason that the mosques are rising on the western horizon everywhere. And I just came back from London and right smack dab in St. Regents Park is a great golden domed mosque. And Islam is now the second greatest denomination in Great Britain.

The church is in a pathetic, weak and inept condition and this demonic thing rises daily and the head of the church of England the Archbishop recently made it known that he does not favor proselytizing Jews and that we need to come to a place of respect for all great world faiths. So we're moving toward a diabolical, ecumenical posture and the only ones who will oppose it are those who see as Paul saw and will not brook such an affront to God. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews and with the devout persons and in the market daily with them that met with him.

And certain philosophers of the Epicureans and the Stoics encountered him and some said what will this babbler say? Others some he seems to be a set-aforth of strange gods because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to Arropegas saying may we know what this new doctrine were if thou speakest this? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears we would know therefore what these things mean for all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. Then stood Paul in the midst of Moss Hill and said let's just stop there this is a you can't be at the epicenter of the world more than where Paul is at Moss Hill.

This is the very nerve center of civilization this is confronting the finest expressions of all that is antithetical and opposed to God and he didn't lift a finger to get there and so Paul found himself brought to Moss Hill

by men who wanted to know what this babbler would say God took something inadvertent a flight from persecution and set in motion a series of things by which his man finds himself in the most prominent place and platform for which anyone could have sought now what are you saying about all that cats?

What I'm saying about all that is this we put too much confidence in organizations and sending ahead letters of application and letting people know our credentials and asking for meetings and for arrangements let there be one man of apostolic timber and he'll not need to lift a finger and God will see that that man will be brought to the right place at the right time for the right purposes the very fact that we have such organizational dependency and have a need to do something and work something is an indication that something is apostolically amiss out of lack and wanting let's give our emphasis not to doing so much as being, let's come to that place of apostolic constituency and character and God will see that such a man is in his place at his time and serving his purpose Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill I leave it to you to answer, what would be the Mars Hill of today?

What would be the locus of confrontation with the world head on? Where God would bring his shabby apostolic figure, this Hebraic piece of nothing an object of derision called the babbler to confront the estimable political and philosophical forces of that time. Can you picture this confrontation? It's classic but do you know that we are heading toward it? We're moving toward this very thing summarized and symbolized in this conflict with one man with the spirit of the world of his generation but are we being fitted for that?

Are we candidates to ascend such a hill? And when we got there, what would we say? Dear Athenians and philosophers of the Epicurean and Stoic kind, I'm accustomed as I am to public speaking but I want to say, and first I'll sprinkle my address with a few jokes so as to make myself winsome and to gain your favor And what was it I learned in homiletics class about the three principal points of preaching? Dear children When the confrontation comes, it'll not be anything that we can predicate nor plan It's what we are in that moment that will be brought to the fore and will be the statement of all the moments that have preceded it even this moment Do you see apostolically?

Is your life in preparation for an ultimate confrontation at a historic moment of God's choosing? Or you don't think confrontationally That means you're not thinking apostolically. For the whole purpose of your salvation of your being in God is to raise up a corporate statement of God to a world that is going to be met head on in the same way that it was met here in one man's home If you don't see it if you don't expect it if you don't desire it and if you're not willingly receiving the preparation in character and life for that confrontation, how then shall it come to pass?

Do you see your life as that? Or is your life what shall I say a succession of services? One week that follows another a kind of mindless kind of thing that has its own tempo and just unfolds itself? Or do you see yourself moving with a direction toward a conclusion, a consummation, confrontation? That's apostolic seeing and that's the kind of seeing in which I trust the Lord is going to induct you in these days, for that seeing changes all You know what is remarkable? That you can take things that are not in any way dramatic mundane, ordinary everyday circumstances of life which will remain mundane and ordinary if they are not perceived through the prism of apostolic seeing But when you put those glasses on the thing that was once ordinary becomes extraordinary All of a sudden there's no such thing as happenstance Things don't just merely happen There seems to be a divine purpose, or at least we're looking for it.

We want to understand it. There's something even in the ordinary that is charged with meaning and significance if we could but draw it out and find this application. Someone here might be astute enough to say, Art what you're describing is a whole way of living Exactly Apostolic living is living to the uttermost and it does not require necessarily heroic events It may consummate in a heroic event, but the preparation for that event is in the everyday and the ordinary and the things that are mediated from God to us in the circumstances of our life our fellowship and our relationship if you could but see that What we are shocking off as being irrelevant or insignificant is the very grist for our apostolic growth and the coming to maturity if we could but draw the fullness of these so-called mundane and ordinary things to the full To be apostolic is to live to the uttermost Show me a bored apostle and I'll show you a false apostle Show me a bored Christian and I'll show you someone out of the faith My God our life is charged with significance Even the world says that anything that happens anywhere affects everything everywhere What should we say? What did you thought this was just a meeting? Shows where you are Series of meetings The novelty of preaching You did not see this as divine event charged with eternal significance You can pray for my Chinese audience of this morning in Davis I don't know if they've yet recovered.

I hope that it won't be quick The epitome of Christian politeness in the Chinese manner They even gave me a cup of water with a lid on it God bless them And their faces are such a testimony to the fact that they do not desire in any way to be extraordinary but that they want just a kind of Christianity that will be fitted in neatly with their professional and academic intentions They're all very degree minded And here comes this freako to upset the apple cart and to call what they're about a virtual kind of apostasy and to call them to the mount of sacrifice and to bring that Isaac, that PhD or the thing for which they really tremble and put it to the death with fire in one hand and with knife in the other Go make your fortune cookies now And they're no different than us It just shows

more when you're Chinese I'll tell you there's a God who is wincing in the heaven who winces and grieves when he looks down not so much at the world but on what is the church so slack so lackluster whose days are so predictable whose services are so predictable whose one week is like another who does not see itself as being called to something of a momentous and ultimate kind that great decisions are what's the word, an abeyance that something is required from them and if so much as one member is not functioning in the calling which is his the whole body is short changed and suffering from malnutrition and the life of God impeded and stopped from flowing at that one point a whole congregation after congregation of passivity looking up to elevated platforms and overworked professionals

I'll tell you God needs to send a Paul into the midst of our hill before the world itself is ever confronted and he may in fact be doing that in these days and so Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill and said what would you have said I'll tell you that I'm standing here and alive in God and a servant because at a critical moment in my own atheistic life I was such a point of confrontation for another and one false word that is to say even a correct religious word would have snapped the thin cord that suspended me over the abyss of total destruction I was fed up to the teeth of talk of cheap lingo of cliches, of humanisms of religious sayings all I needed was someone to say are you saved brother and I would have turned on my heel and walked into an eternal perdition but at that critical

moment when we stood in the midst of Mars Hill the word that came was the word of God and it was not John 3.16 because even if we invoke that at our convenience and the spirit of God has not prompted it it's a dead word the word of God can be made cliché but where is that one who when the critical juncture comes and the eternity is at stake can open his mouth and speak a word calculated for that moment from heaven coming unconsciously through a vessel wholly yielded to the spirit of God without mediating of

how it's going to sound how will it be accepted or received what will the consequence be he merely speaks I know of another one who acted just like that and he was the first one to be stoned to death for it called Stephen this is a mount for mount saints where you may go up but it's

not guaranteed that you'll come down you don't rub philosophers the wrong way you don't put your finger on the spirit of this world and show it's fallacies and it's defects and it's basic flawed error and think that you're going to come down from that mount alive these men have a vested interest to protect who look every day to hear some new thing and somehow never come to the knowledge of it they're phonies they're performers and they think themselves spiritual because they have a plaque that says to the unknown God oh how honorific shouldn't Paul have respected that heck he would he gave himself such a slap in the kisser that the first word out of his mouth was I perceive that in all things you're too superstitious you want to insult intellectuals go tell them that where did that come

from is that what he learned in the school of evangelism I'm not encouraging you to be insulting some of us have a greater talent than others but I am encouraging you to an obedience to the spirit of God whose word is perfect if you'll allow him to speak it through you even when it offends your own sensibility and taste even by the speaking of which will threaten your stance and your relationship with those who are hearing you will you still allow that word to be emitted does God have possession of your mouth or are you quick to speak something of a lesser kind that saves you from the embarrassment let alone the danger of being ultimately confronting we're enjoying to speak the truth in love and I can't tell you dear saint, maybe only you preachers know the ungainly feeling of coming to a

series of days like this and looking at the clock in the pastor's office 15 minutes away from the commencement of the service and not knowing what to speak or how to begin or what is the Lord's stratagem for these days and yet being required to begin you'll find yourself in the midst of a mars hill and there's a moment that comes when you're required to act and to speak and to trust and such obedience is not something that shall come in the moment if it has not been preceded by a whole history of obedience are you moving presently? from obedience to obedience how many times have you sucked down and swallowed down a word that you know you should have spoken I'm not talking about some great oracular public address but even to another brother or a sister a word of exhortation or reproof or

correction but you were afraid that you might have been misunderstood or you would have been accused of being unloving and who can bear that and so you were silent when you ought to have spoken and do you think that by such a process you're going to come to the midst of mars hill? do you see why the apostolic thing is the masterpiece why it's the thing in itself why it's the sum total of the painstaking investment of God in a vessel are you allowing that kind of preparation in yourself and moving from an obedience to an obedience that when you are sufficiently formed at the hand of God he can bring you to a crisis moment where very eternity is at stake for many to wear those glasses to have that kind of perspective changes the whole contour of what our life is about and that change is

apostolic christianity there's an intensity that comes into the life there's a seriousness that has come in that was not there before where we're sort of always having an eye cocked toward heaven and sensing God's moving and unfolding in the walking out of our life in a daily way our days are charged with eternal significance and meaning if we can but see it and receive it I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious not in some things but in all things Paul began with such what shall I say such a crack, such a strike at the very heart of the whole presumption of these philosophers if there's anything about which an intellectual is assured is that he's not superstitious he thinks he's eminently the man of reason and

rationality but Paul sees through the whole pretense of that

supposed respect for unknown God and drills them as I pass by and beheld your devotions I found an altar with the inscription to the unknown God whom therefore you ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you this is either an egotist an extravagant flamboyant personality utterly what shall we say assured of himself or is this apostolic meekness of such a kind that we're not prepared to recognize the same man that says follow me as I follow Christ if you see by the natural eye you'll be offended, your ear will recoil at Paul an apostle called by Jesus Christ no ifs ands or buts, there's such a what's the word upfront clarity and affirmativeness of Paul speaking and it's utterly free of any vanity or presumption it's utter meekness to recognize what is true and to state it and there's

nothing there by which Paul compliments or elevates himself him whom you ignorantly worship I declare unto you I can just see these guys jerking and doing a double take for they're not accustomed to that kind of authority, it sounds so much like audacity they're more accustomed to a self effacing well I don't know who can say really what truth is these are complicated questions one can only give one's life to search doesn't that sound so ennobling, doesn't it sound so uplifting, here's a man that cuts right through the whole phony veneer of that and says no with the unwillingness to recognize that the creator is also Lord of all things Paul is not going to allow anybody to get by with some kind of syrupy respect for nature without pointing them to the fact that the God who is it's creator

is also it's Lord and requires their allegiance and obedience with the God we were as insistent and showed to the so called nature lovers of our generation that to separate nature from it's creator and the creator from it's lordship is cop out of an ultimate kind and the eternal consequence of that is fearful to contemplate God doesn't need temples made with hands because men who think so think that if they provide it they can manipulate God to their end he's above our ends and he's not something for us to be manipulated and not the least of the things for which we are guilty in recent days is to think that by worship we can even evoke the presence of God that he's a jack in the box waiting for us to hit the right formula and when we have it in so called worship which is hardly anything

more than a droid musicality aided and abetted by the paraphernalia on a platform God is going to come and give us the gift of his presence.

We can draw him like water out of a tap by what we do he's not made he's not waiting for temples made with hands he cannot be manipulated by men and we need an apostolic person to come into our midst and to point his finger in our chest and to show us the presumption of the affront of which we are guilty as charismatics as though he needed anything seeing that he gives to all life and breath and all things how come we can't say that? because we don't really believe that he gives all things because the chapter that precedes chapter 17 is chapter 16 now that's piece of real exegesis but act 16 is Paul with his back hanging in ribbons having been publicly stripped and humiliated and flawed within an inch of his life and cast into an inner dungeon in some stinking place in Europe called

Philippi to smell the dung and the urine of the other prisoners and listen to their moanings hundreds of miles removed from the place from which he came and from his colleagues and from the people of the faith and Paul himself did not moan and say Lord how come and I thought I was being obedient to the heavenly vision and look where it's got me I'm now a candidate for gangrene and death and complete concealment lost to the body to which you have called me because a Macedonian appeared to me in the night saying come help us but not a murmur of complaint but counting it privilege to suffer for Christ's sake

and seeing suffering as the consequence of obedience now when Paul and Silas worship God in the midst of their suffering, the bars were loosed and the bonds, the bands and everything

that imprisoned men broke for God inhabits the praises of his people all the more in adversity than rather than charismatic comfort the God who made all things, the God who does all things the God who gives all things is a statement that a man can speak to Athenian philosophers with cogency, penetration and authority who experiences all things and receives the all things as coming from the hand of God who can formulate what I'm saying into a kind of principle pay for the day if you can I'll tell you what it is because time is running the degree of our authority whether our statements fall limply to the ground or are like water off the proverbial duck's back or are penetrating and drive the point of God home to the unsuspecting and unbelieving heart is the issue of whether we not only

believe that God is the God of all things but have received the all things from his hand, even the sufferings, even the imprisonments, even that back hanging in strips, even the seeming failures and the humiliations and all of the kinds of things that constitute the faith believing in the implicit sovereignty of God for all things we have no greater authority our statements bear no greater weight than what we really believe about God and by God, and that's why so many of our statements are hollow that's why they have so little effect and impact because the density and the weight and the penetration of them is compounded by the truth of them as received in our own life as coming from God when Paul says he give us to all life and breath and all things, that's not a suggestion, that's a

statement of absolute certainty about God from the man who knows the all things of God, even the sufferings that come from obedience to God and when he says all things he means all things and somehow that word to those Greek philosophers must have penetrated their hearts, are you understanding the point they're speaking and speaking there's faith and faith, there's preaching and preaching there's witnessing and witnessing there's even prayer and praying and praying can you tell when you hear a man pray publicly where in fact that man is with regard to God not by the long and voluminous eloquence of his prayer, but let it be ever so short, what is the weight of it what is its heft what resonates in that prayer that bespeaks a long knowledge of God of an intimate kind and what on the

contrary indicates superficial relationship and mere formality that bears no weight at all our words condemn us or they bless us and I just want to put you on alert dear saints not to be content with a phraseological Christianity with mere verbal equations that are correct what is the weight of them what is the penetration of them, what is the heft of them, what is the constituency, the make up is the statement of the kind of life that you're living the kind of walk that you're walking the consistency of it, the truth of it, the reality of it will come out in the substance of your speaking and that's why the world can more or less disregard us and are not arrested but I can tell you this every single soul who heard Paul that day on Mars Hill found themselves eternally responsible for that

experience to meet and to hear an apostle once is to put you before God with an eternal accountability that needs nothing more to be added what kind of a church would we be if that were true of us that but one speaking is all that's required and that the person confronted by us and who hears us is eternally accountable for that one thing maybe I can say less speaking fewer words but truer words so God has determined the times before appointed the bounce of the habitation having made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth that they should seek the Lord if happily they might feel after him and find him though he be not far from every one of us you know what we've just read the purpose for human existence one statement in point of time to men who spend all their

lives seeking for but never coming to the truth and wanting to hear some new thing in one statement Paul tells them what is the whole purpose for human existence God has of one blood made all nations of men and established the bounds of their habitation that they might seek after him if happily they might be found of him how can we put that in our own words the whole reason that God has created creation and established mankind and given him breath is that he might in this life be found of him why ought that sound strangely like a medieval view as if this whole life is a veil of tears and that the whole purpose is somehow the knowledge of God and that the real consequence is eternal but that this life is the finding and the knowledge of him exactly come on let's go back to the middle ages

if that's what truth is but how come we're not seeing it because the truth has been subverted because it's been lost in a welter of other considerations that does not make this the single purpose for being but our families, our life, our comfort our success, our careers even our churches have blurred the single purpose for which God has created man and given him breath on this earth that he might seek after him and be found of him, that's awfully narrow, that's utterly dogmatic it's calculated to offend men at every point in particular to say this reason only but I want to say that not enough of them are being told that and being told it in a way that compels them to rethink the whole issue of their life and of the issue of God how come Art because we are not authoritative enough to speak

that because we do not ourselves believe that well yeah I do, yeah are you living as if you do until you live as if you do you don't in fact believe that and therefore you cannot say that in a way that would compel men to review the whole purpose for their existence and seek God while happily they might be found of him oh dear children well, I don't know when to end, and the times of this ignorance God winked but now commands all men everywhere to repent don't you love Paul for that there isn't a mollifying word in his bone I mean, he's clear, he's concise he's demanding he's unsparing, he's uncompromising why the man acts as if his every word is the issue of eternity for his hearing he wouldn't dare mitigate any statement, he won't in any way lessen the effect of it he speaks with such

an authority and such a fullness as if the very issue of eternity is at stake because indeed, that's what it is the question for us is how do we speak and the way in which our whole relationship began two months ago was with the subject of eternity and the confrontation that we are not sufficiently eternally minded and until we are we can never be as confrontive as Paul we can never speak with that authority we can never feel that the issue is utterly grave and that therefore we have an obligation to be uncompromising in our statement for life and death is at stake nothing less.

I wonder how many of you who are hearing me this evening have Jewish colleagues co-workers or are going to a Jewish dentist or doctor or lawyer or your children have a Jewish teacher or what, and it has not once occurred to you ever that such a one needs to hear a word seeing that eternity is at stake how many of us have gasped with Paul who is sufficient for these things why if I go on like this I can almost paint you a picture that we could begin to think that we're almost in a state of deception ourselves and we're living veiled, there's like a fleshly thing over us, what do you call it like a tissue a hymen, what is that word somebody help me a membrane over us in which we thought it normative, it dilutes the light we don't see in total clarity but we see sufficiently and we act

normatively and that's okay someone needs to rend that what's that word, that membrane and let the light the apostolic light in and we'll gasp and choke and splutter this is the same Paul who saw the things that were invisible and eternal as being more real and more compelling than the things that are seen you don't come to that kind of seeing in the moment and you'll never come to it so long as your eyes are ogling the

things that are to be found in the mall this requires a ruthlessness against the things that are visible, that are not in themselves inherently sinful but the totality of them being of the world is sufficient to dull your perception of the things that are unseen invisible and eternal we need to declare war saints, not for our sake only but for a dying world's sake who have

not heard not been confronted, not been challenged not seen, for what is apostolic but to communicate things as God himself sees them and as men will one day be required to see them in the day of eternity when it's too late in any way to remedy a life of false seeing for God commands all men everywhere to repent that was two thousand years ago, what is God commanding now because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead and when they heard that of the resurrection of the dead some mocked others said we will hear thee again this matter so Paul departed from among them Paul's last word is the day of judgment God has commanded a day, God has

appointed a day in which he will judge all men is there anything more easily, what's the word, ridiculed than the issue of judgment by the world about us is there a women's magazine or a popular magazine in which there is not a guffaw and a laugh and a cartoon of some long bearded jerk carrying a sandwich sign saying repent for the day of the Lord is at hand it's the world's classic point of humor there's nothing that strikes its funny bone more than the issue of eternal judgment, there's nothing more out of keeping with the temper of our civilization there's nothing more inane, more patently contradictory to all that we celebrate as being right and reasonable and ethical and if there is a God he knows that I'm a nice guy and I don't have to believe something, I've never murdered, I've

never, of course he knows this presumption against God and to stand before him one day that white throne judgment when God raises the dead the living, the small and the great and they stand before him and the books are opened and the one who is who has been raised from the dead, who bears the scars of having taken the judgment of mankind upon himself and a splitting moment in which everything that was false is revealed when all values are reversed when you see as God sees in that uncommon light and that shriek is emitted because you know something final, something irrevocable has taken place and that there's no court of appeals and there's no going back, there's no alleviating or changing it's set, it's final and it's eternal and you're stuck because you poo-pooed because you laughed,

because you ridiculed because you were presumptuous, because you blasphemed, because you shocked off the things that men would have said to you and now the day of reckoning has come God has appointed the dead.

I want to say that the greatest measure of our knowledge of God is the knowledge of God as judge and it's just at that point that we flake out. We love him as the God of kindness and love and mercy and goodness we love all these wonderful attributes but this one attribute makes us uncomfortable but I want to say that to omit that is to lose God and to miss God entirely because he is indivisible, because his garment is seamless because it's not for you to pick and to choose the white meat and to leave out the other parts that are distasteful God as judge is what God is as God and to omit that because it's uncomfortable and you don't like it is to omit God the deepest knowledge of God that really releases the knowledge of God in his mercy and his love for what is mercy independent of his judgment is God as judge. And as much as the world lampoons and ridicules that day of judgment that is our greatest responsibility as the message to bear for the failure to bear that message enervates, weakens and emasculates our entire gospel and therefore in the same measure lessens the church that bears an inadequate gospel message.

Paul said, knowing the terror of God, I persuade men so I'm asking you to do your homework I'm asking you to search the scriptures and the manifold references to God as judge and don't let them go with mere creedal assent but let the fear of God come into your gut let the sense of what hell means as an eternal burning begin to bring something of that heat into your own soul it has been lost to us saints and little wonder for we have lost the sense of heaven and equally the sense of hell. Eternity is not one of our considerations. We're in the world and it is too much with us God has appointed a day and it's not a day from which we shall be omitted if we live lackluster and undistinguished Christian lives in this life.

We will have to give account for what we have done in our bodies both good and bad and so I invited a brother in California whom I've known for 30 years at whose home I received my baptism in the Holy Spirit who believes that we have a destiny together as it pertains to the Jews in the last days though because he's Gentile. I said well why don't you come with me to Israel for the conference that we're going to have in Jerusalem in November and go on with me to Egypt for the conference that we're having in Alexandria for ministers from the Islamic Nations. Well when God tells me I'll go.

I said my dear brother you know that we've come to a time when God is not doing all that much telling these days but waiting to see what you will freely choose to do when you're free to choose to do what you will. You've got to be a sap not to do what God tells you but the greatest and the ultimate act for which the reward is the most distinguished is what we make ourselves free to do and are willing to do for God has appointed a day in which he will judge and Paul felt that the judge was at the door and that this judgment was imminent he wasn't projecting it two thousand years hence he saw it as something immediate and about to take place and that is apostolic seeing apostolic seeing is not based on chronology it's based on the known character of God whose promise is true and that God has appointed a day in which he will judge and the prophet and the apostle conveys that as being immediate, imminent and at the door and if we believe that we would be living so differently now if your consideration of eternity does not affect your present walk you do not have an adequate perception of eternity well enough haranguing for one night lest no one comes back tomorrow night don't you love God? and you know as many times as I've heard men say that from the pulpit and winced because it was cliché I don't believe that I spoke it as cliché you know why I love him?

I love him because of his jealousy over us and will not let us go I love him because he'll not allow us to be slack and lackluster saints and eternally wail and lament lives inadequately lived in the day of eternity, but now now he hawks us, now he pleads with us, now he exhorts us, now he rebukes us with his great love to bring us into the apostolic reality for which we were called and for which we have fallen and accepted something lighter and much less so let's thank him and let's let him finger the things that need to be removed and separated away and the things that have blurred our apostolic seeing and dulled our perception that are harmless in themselves not blatantly and conspicuously evil in themselves, but the sum total of all of those visible, worldly comfortable things has

made us something less than God's intention we're moving toward a place of confrontation with the spirit of this world head on and when that day comes may we not be found wanting and may those who hear us be entirely without excuse for to hear us is not just to hear a credo but to see and to experience the thing made flesh the thing in itself the apostolic reality of the church so Lord we're just asking you this was a warm up I know this was just a preliminary this was being gentle we're asking you my God to roll up your sleeves as if these are really the last days as if the time is really short, as if there has been a whole historic loss that has gone on for generations and decades with all that we have celebrated charismatically still falling short of the glory of God and that somehow

you need to make it up in a more intensive and short span of time by such a ruthless dealing with us with words my God that pierce us through that require and we're asking you to do it in these very days lest we stand before you in that day eternally embarrassed for the things that we so supinely were satisfied with and the casual things and our inadequate measure of good services and completely losing the sense of the radicalness of the faith and the issues of life and death and eternity at the heart of them Lord help us I don't even know what tomorrow night is, you know but we're asking Lord don't spare us address us as sons and daughters who have been fitted to hear a word calculated for our maturity for our true last days service a word which is heard and received that the logic of

which will bring us to leave into the place not only of persecution and sacrifice but martyrdom and if that's our calling we embrace it with joy for that much greater will be our reward and our crown Lord I'm asking that you lay a deposit in these nights from which this people cannot turn a plumb line a standard to which everything must be related and whatever does not align to be ruthlessly discarded come my God have a people for your name in this locality that will affect and shake my God not only this region but beyond nations stir us through the night hours bring to recall the appointed statements you've already spoken prepare us for what is to follow grant us the spirit of intercession that we ourselves should pray for the severe word that we ourselves deed we thank you and give you

praise that an hour has come when you are so speaking and so dealing grant us the grace to receive it and not to allow a syllable to fall to the ground we thank you and give you that praise Lord in Jesus name God's people said Amen

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