

Fren-15 Apostolic Foundations - Principalities & Powers

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon emphasizes the Church's call to recognize and engage in spiritual warfare against the principalities and powers that oppose God's purposes.

Duration: 1:10:59

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 3:8-11

Topics: "Principalities"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of consciously walking in the light of God's word and being spiritually discerning. They highlight the influence of powers in society, such as education, culture, and religion, and how recognizing and resisting their domination can free others. The speaker shares an example of two African students facing opposition in obtaining a visa, but through persistence and prayer, they were able to overcome the obstacles. The sermon also acknowledges the difficulty and opposition faced in discussing this topic, but emphasizes the need for grace and unity in the church to break through into a new transcendent place.

Transcript

We have a very difficult topic before us tonight. Difficult in every way. Complex in itself.

Difficult because it is unfamiliar to us. And difficult because it is strenuously opposed by the powers of darkness. I already feel exhausted before I begin.

So great is the strain of this. We are really going to need grace. The grace that is given to preach.

So I just ask you to join your spirits with ours. We stand at such a place tonight that we could either collapse in a welter of confusion or break through into a new transcendent place. We have all the potential for this being an historic hour for the Church.

Just for the proclamation of what can go forth. So I'm saying these things not to be melodramatic. But just to alert your spirit and to join us in your spirit in prayer now.

And to be prayerful even through the speaking tonight. If your mind is not fruitful or understanding don't panic. There are issues deeper than the issue of mind.

So just receive in your spirit the engrafted word. Don't get all blocked up in your nervousness. Or your nervousness for us.

But let's be co-laborers together in attending something that needs to be born. Travailing together of something that needs to be brought forth. Whose time has come.

It requires the entire operation of the Church together. It's not the matter of the virtuosity of a single speaker. The powers of hell are trembling for the prospect of this night.

And a very serious defeat can be inflicted upon them. And much depends upon our own response. So I want to read the Scriptures which is the heart of the text for tonight.

We began it this morning in Ephesians the third chapter. Where Paul says in the eighth verse that to me the very least of all saints this grace was given. To preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.

And to bring to light what is the application of the mystery. Which for ages has been hidden in God the Creator of all things. In order that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the Church.

To the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which he carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord. My subject tonight is the principalities and the powers.

And what is the manifold wisdom of God. That must be now made known to them. For this is the eternal purpose of God for the Church.

And if we fail in this purpose. We fail in all. Let's pray.

We so understand Paul tonight Lord. Who beseeched the saints that they might pray for him. That a door of utterance might be opened.

That he might speak as he ought to speak. The mysteries of Christ. This least of all men.

Who prayed for the grace that is given to preach. I ask a measure of that grace tonight Lord. That we might preach.

That we might proclaim. And set forth something of these mysteries. In your great love and mercy toward us.

In your pity that comprehends our weakness and our foolishness. Come and show yourself strong to your people. In the power of your own life.

Your own wisdom and understanding. And we will bow before you. In such gratitude.

For Jesus' sake. In whose name we pray. Amen.

I agree with an American writer in his comment about the Church and the powers. He remarks on how remarkable is the naivety and the ignorance of the Church toward them. It's a remarkable ignorance and a remarkable indifference.

Not because it just happens to be something of interest. But it is absolutely foundational to the whole calling of the Church. We have majored in the minors.

And have ignored this major theme. And this condemns all of our activity to a certain kind of futility and fruitlessness. We dissipate our energy away on a horizontal level in an earthly way.

Even though we have been told by Paul that we wrestle not against flesh and blood. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood. But against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of the darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

That's Ephesians, the sixth chapter, verses twelve. This is a wrestling, a struggle. A corporate struggle.

Something that is waiting for the collective or the corporate activity of us as the army of God. It's a militant company that can address this only. What does it mean, the principalities and powers, the rulers of darkness in heavenly places? There's a whole realm of mystery here.

The heaven that's referred to here is not the one occupied by God. But something in the very atmosphere that broods over the earth. The rulers and the darkness of the air.

That influence the conduct of men and nations more than we would suppose. All things were created by God. And even these principalities and powers are an angelic creation.

A spirit order that was given initially by God for his own purposes. But in the fallen creation, they too have rebelled against their creator. And though that they were intended as a benign influence in the aiding of God in his purposes to men.

Somehow to operate in the material world, though invisible. To affect a certain kind of order and coherence for human life. They have rebelled against the purpose of the creator.

And have taken unto themselves their own purposes. And seek themselves to be deified. And to turn the loyalties and the attention of men to themselves.

And to establish their own values contrary to God. And to turn men away from God. And so they operate through nations, through institutions.

Through things economic, cultural, political, religious. We see this power displayed in nationalism. In rivalry and wars.

In the celebration of race and of power. The very German theologians who would not consider this subject as being respectable. And were embarrassed by Paul's reference to these spirit entities.

And wanted to dismiss it as some kind of vestige of his rabbinical understanding. For demon powers of darkness are not a polite subject. Had to in their own lifetime experience these powers.

In the paganism, the violence and the death that characterized Nazi Germany. Where these powers broke through in complete sway And the turning of the loyalties of men to themselves. In the name of race and nation.

A new order. A perverse distortion. An anti-Christ manifestation.

Someone has wisely said that Germany had lost World War II. But the same powers of darkness of the air that precipitated it remain unchallenged still. The phrase is even in our vocabulary.

We say there's something in the air. We travel from one country to another. And the moment that the plane comes down.

We can sense something in the air. We would be fools and naive to continue in a willful ignorance of these realities. You say just how influential are these invisible spirit powers of the air? They were sufficient to crucify Christ.

That's what we are told in 1 Corinthians 2. In the 6th verse. Paul says yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature. A wisdom however not of this age nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.

But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery. The hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory. The wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood.

For if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. The phrase the rulers of this age does not refer to men. But to the rulers of darkness of the principalities and powers of the air but to the princes of darkness of those who reign in the principalities and powers of the air invisible who are super terrestrial who are beyond the earth but who intervene and act through terrestrial authorities who are ignorant about the existence of these powers.

Because if they had known and understood the wisdom of God they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. I would like to tell you that this is a great influence. I think that we are still waiting for believers to write the history of civilization.

Because we cannot even explain adequately the history of our own century independent of an exposition of the invisible forces of the air that have influenced the conduct of nations in our own generation. Totalitarianism and Nazism cannot be understood independent of this phenomenon. This is more than sociology, more than political science.

This is occultism, Satanism, demonism. The unseen forces of darkness of the air. And we need to come to a maturity that recognizes the things that are true.

Not as some kind of painful obligation to attend but as the very eternal purpose of God for the Church. Thank you, Lord, for bringing us now this far. Now I want to try this on you.

Do you understand that there is a cosmic struggle, a mastery for the control for the dominion of the whole cosmos going on in the universe A moral struggle for the mastery of the cosmos. By two kinds of moral orders. The righteousness and holiness and humility of God.

And another kind of wisdom which is diabolically opposed to it in every point in particular. What is its moral wisdom? What are its principles of operation? Lust. Force.

Power. Threat. Seduction.

Intimidation. Fear. And by these powers they have ruled and jerked and manipulated an entire mankind.

We read in Colossians in the second chapter that he has disarmed the rulers and the authorities of the air. Chapter 2, verse 15. He disarmed the rulers and the authorities and he made a public display of them having triumphed over them through the cross.

They are disarmed and defeated. They have no effectual legal power to continue. They can only victimize the ignorant.

The spiritually blind. Who have not understood that these powers have been disarmed and broken at the cross. Can you understand why Paul wanted to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified? Something is more at stake than our atonement in the work of Jesus at the cross.

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Bringing back as it were the rebellious powers into submission to the purpose for which God had commissioned them. If they had known this wisdom, they would not have crucified Him.

And every time that the cross is proclaimed in authenticity and in power, their defeat is made more manifest. Little wonder we hear so little preaching of the cross. There is a power in the cross.

And there is a triumph that was won there that needs to be made manifest in every place through the presence and the proclamation of a believing church whose very presence is a statement to the principalities and the powers that their final vanquish and defeat is at hand where it sees this faith, this understanding, this proclamation, the realization of this victory by those themselves who are no longer under fear or manipulation or threat. Then are these forces required to recoil and draw back and release their influence over men in that area. We labor in vain if we do not understand this.

What are our evangelizations? Our Christian programs. Sound and fury signifying nothing if we have not first wrestled against the principalities and powers of the air. And broken their uninterrupted sway over the very areas where we seek to bring the light of God.

I want to quote from a classic book on this subject written by a Dutch theologian Hendrik Berkhof Christ and the Powers Such a little book but such a gift from God. I don't make any apology to you that I am not myself God's researcher and scholar. This is a true theological work.

I only thank him for the grace that is sufficient that I can understand it and commend it to your attention. I strongly recommend that you obtain it. And I don't even know that it's in a French translation.

And I want to quote some things from it. He writes that all resistance and every attack against the gods of this age will be unfruitful unless the church herself is resistance and attack. Unless she demonstrates in her life and fellowship how men can live freed from the powers.

So long as we are a people who are fearful for our security tremble over the issue of our own finances begin to model ourselves after the world in techniques for obtaining funds we constitute no threat to these powers. Something needs not only to be proclaimed but to be demonstrated. In the very life of the church that it itself lives freed from the powers.

Free from fear from anxiety from seduction from manipulation and how guilty are we of that. In our own bedrooms as well as from our own religious platforms things calculated to produce a certain effect to obtain a certain response and so long as we are unconscious of this and are moving in the very wisdom of the powers themselves we constitute no witness against them. We need to display that not only are we

free from the fear for our own security that we are free from mammon but joyfully free.

Jesus I know and Paul I know but who are you? Yes, I hear your praise and I hear your choruses but there is something about them that is hollow that is mere singing that is not yet something that I am required as the rulers of darkness to acknowledge.

Prince of darkness I am forced to recognize as children there is a faith and a faith there is worship and worship there is praise and praise and there must be a cry that goes up from us out of the earth for authenticity in all of these things for when our praise swells up to heaven that is more than the product of charismatic manipulation but is the spontaneous breaking forth of a celebration of God who has saved us not only out of sin not only out of hell but out of fear insecurity anxiety and has brought us to a transcendent place of apostolic faith that is more than just subscribing to correct doctrine for the just shall live by their faith for the just shall live by their faith I cannot take the time now to speak in a biographical manner almost nine years in community together no

outside income no employment in the world no organizational connection 55 souls living together needing to be fed every day clothed and housed in northern Minnesota in severe sub-arctic temperatures there are some very real issues before us which we can no longer afford to play the manifold wisdom of God that is waiting to be demonstrated beyond the earth and into the very cosmos itself is reserved for one instrument in God's eternal purpose the church you can understand that that's more than an institution that provides religious services it is a people who live without fear who are already in the realm of the eternal who are joyfully freed from the power of mammon who are walking in light and in righteousness and in truth where justice and mercy prevail he says in their own common life

the powers are having free sway in Africa and inciting one race against another and even tribe against tribe and men are playing upon the words of justice as a justification for their own terror and violence there needs to be a standard in the world of those who can speak to the issue of justice because it has been established in their own common life this is a calling for a church that is more than just a casual conglomerate of individuals a people together whose corporate intercession makes the principalities and powers of the air part of the place where they are it is inevitable that such a church will be resisted that the powers themselves will test it and resort even to oppression and persecution Jesus said that if the rulers of this age knew the wisdom of God they would not have

crucified the Lord of Glory the fact that they have not opposed us is not a statement to our spirituality or maturity but a scandal and an evidence that we are not yet the church that we ought to be and oppression and persecution from these powers is inevitable because it will be their last act of despair against us just as they were desperate against him and rubbed their hands in joy when they had him totally in their power he who went to his death as a lamb who did not resist them yielded himself to that terrible power and by that yielding triumphed over them it was a final showdown, a conflict between two wisdoms two moral orders violence, force and power a vicious brutality against a lamb slain from the foundations of the world who did not so much as open his mouth and suffered in

meekness and humility the worst that could be brought against him revealed the best that was in him the enemy's worst brought out God's best utter malignity met utter magnanimity and we know who won in the power of that life he bruised the head of the serpent but it is left to the church to finish him off not just in this age but for the ages to come not just in this world so as to release its captives but also to make an eternal demonstration of the manifold wisdom of God into the very axis of the whole cosmos itself to the

principalities and powers of the air I'm not in any way trying to be religiously impressive to find some rare esoteric subject that is rarely sounded this is nuts and bolts utter practicality the loftiest eternal purposes of God that affect our daily character and

posture in the world as the church if we see this if we consciously walk in the light of it if we become acute in our spiritual discernment and begin to sense the play of these powers in the civilization where we occupy and recognize their influence through institutions of education and culture and religion we walk like giants in the earth not only are we unimpressed by them but we free others from their unnecessary domination I could give you some examples and these are only first steps in the walking out of this two of the students that we hope to have come to us from Africa to America were opposed by the American consulate officer in that African country he gave every reason why they could not be granted a visa and every objection that he gave we sought to overcome he required a

written statement, we sent that he wanted further credentials, we sent that and still he opposed their coming and so at their insistence he telephoned me from Africa to Minnesota and the call came about 5 o'clock in the morning our time he awakened me as you can understand I was not at my best but he was perfect in his diction a piece of American officialdom very correct and precise very legal and authoritative and he explained to me why in all good conscience he could not grant them a visa he had a moral objection because he knew that if he granted them a temporary visa as soon as they arrived in America he would ask for an extension and somehow that would be immoral and in my state of half-awake, half-asleep I told him that I agreed it sounded so correct and so I hung up and then the

thought came to me what is immoral about applying for an extension if the initial visa itself is legitimate and who is he to have moral scruples about two precious Christian young men whose heavenly morality far exceeds his own so I prayed about that and I felt impressed to write him a letter a rather strong statement and I sent it to these two students rather than to him knowing that such a statement would prejudice him even more against them I said you read this and pray about this you are willing to take the risk you have been given this letter they gave it to him and in the letter this is what I said in essence I said there is a thin line between being a Christian and being an official and being officious and this is a tendency and a danger in which all administrators in the earth

stand and there is only one healthy corrective that will keep you from such error and that is to recognize that the earth is the Lord's and the nations and the fullness thereof and those who dwell within them you need to be reminded sir that you are only called to administer within a certain restricted sense to serve actually the purposes of God for as Dietrich Bonhoeffer tells us in his book on ethics government itself is only an instrumentality given of God to establish that sufficient amount of order by which the church may continue its life and its purpose for God has created all things including governments in order that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be demonstrated well he was offended but within a matter of days he mysteriously granted them their visa this

is beyond the issue of men and flesh and blood and I haven't quite savored the full mystery of this experience but I think it is this something was expressed to the secular authorities by the church in the authority and the anointing of God citing the word of God as our credential and bringing these earthly authorities into the recognition of the limitation that God has set for them that required the principalities and powers that were operating through that American official to withdraw back and to release these men for the purposes of God there is something that God is waiting for in an entire church an authority to be expressed a quality of praise to be ascending up a depth of intercession that is corporate that will require

these powers and rulers of the air to break and to part and

to recoil and draw back and release are you with us so far? can you take more? what is the manifold wisdom of God that is to be demonstrated by the church I have already hinted at it it is the very antithesis of the wisdom of the rulers of darkness where the powers celebrate force and violence and brutality in power God celebrates weakness and foolishness and humility it is strange how weak I felt tonight I wondered if physically I was going to make it up to the platform reminding God that I had but one qualification to be a mouth for this speaking that it pleases you by the foolishness of preaching to save them that will believe that God has chosen the foolish things and the weak things has he chosen to confound the things that are mighty and wise are we majoring in foolishness? are we

willing to suffer the humiliation of weakness? or are we reflecting the wisdom of the powers themselves and therefore constitute to them no threat at all if we shall move increasingly as an apostolic church if we shall incite against ourselves the opposition and the persecution of these powers in fact for the first time I am understanding not only the persecution of Christians but the unspeakable vehemence and cruelty with which they have been historically persecuted this is more than merely putting men to death this is flaying them alive sawing them asunder burning them at stakes there is a viciousness and a cruelty a diabolical hatred that fumes against God in man and wants to make it surrender and give up to its terms but instead it gets another response those who love their enemies

and pray for their persecutors and say in their dying breath lay not this sin to their charge when Stephen sighed his last breath with those words the eternal power of that statement broke something in the powers of the air overhead that released a certain angry Jew to experience a prick against his spirit to which he finally had to surrender on the road to Damascus something happens when meekness and humility meets utter viciousness is a demonstration of the manifold wisdom of God that these powers are obliged to recognize for nothing else can impress them than the very nature of God the holiness of his character under supreme duress and pressure as only suffering and extremity reveals it isn't that what happened on the cross?

Jesus didn't writhe and groan to preserve his protoplasmic life he yielded up the ghost father forgive them and a certain Gentile man, a Roman a centurion a professional brute a man schooled and calculated in murder who saw many squirm and die on the cross and spat at them in disdain and contempt for they were only men clutching their life saw this God-man die under extreme duress and pain but he died magnificently and some words broke forth out of his mouth even beyond his consciousness truly this is the Son of God as he walked so are we also called to walk in this world God is waiting for one final demonstration that shall penetrate to the very heart of the cosmos itself demonstrated through the church in the fulfillment of the eternal purpose of God I don't think my wife will be

embarrassed if I share this we've had a long history of vexation and trial and conflict in being Jew and Gentile male and female the mystery of the church and how often have I reacted in anger or force of intimidation or threat but by the grace of God the grace which is given something being worked that some months ago she said something to me of such a vexing kind that everything in me that is natural and human wanted to express itself in anger but by the grace that has and is being worked in me in the privilege which is mine in a true community with God's people I heard myself responding in another way in a soft way in a kind way yet a truthful way I only said you're a most disagreeable woman and she blinked her eyes and I just sensed something was being transacted in that very moment

you may laugh but there was a release in the powers of the air that had been brooding over our household to wreak their vengeance and their viciousness that was required to break into part and to loose its influence upon my wife because of the soft answer that came in the character of God how we shall react under extreme duress and persecution is the issue which is before us now our little impatiences our critical spirit and disdain our irritation with one another is already an evidence how little prepared we are for this how foolish we are that the very things that we have complained about in the church namely the trials and the irritations that come to us from other saints is exactly the provision of God for the shaping of his godly character in us to move us to that ultimate place of

response that when the ultimate persecution comes we shall stand graciously and exhibit the wisdom of God we shall demonstrate the triumph of the cross by the eternal spirit we shall offer ourselves as Jesus did in that final moment the eternal spirit was offering up God himself so that in the ultimate moment of his trial and suffering the demonstration that was being made to the powers that made of them an open spectacle and a spoil was the demonstration of God being all in all bringing to the core of the cosmos his quintessential self when that same demonstration shall come from us the triumph will be complete the powers demolished creation released and all authority will be under him and the last enemy which is death will have been triumphed over this is the eternal purpose of life

this is the eternal design of God for the church the phrase to be crucified with Christ is not for us a luxury or an optional option it is the very basis for our overcoming for once you have experienced that death and risen to newness of life then what shall you be afraid of this is a call for maturity for a church to come into its fullness according to the eternal purpose of God which he has intended for us for which he has created all things in order that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers of the air don't think that this is a complete statement tonight it is only a first statement but a necessary statement and I can tell you that the powers of darkness are not happy for it is to sow a seed in your spirit to open to

you a whole new line of consideration to recognize what is our high calling in Christ Jesus that there is a purpose for our being that has more than that which has to do with our own persons more even than a kingdom come in the earth it is something beyond the earth and affects the ages to come it is something that pertains to the whole moral order of the cosmos itself and the purposes of God reserved for the church may we see our calling and rise up to meet it and receive every difficulty and trial that comes into our life and experience as coming from his hand this will give us a new view towards suffering a much more realistic anticipation of our future in persecution not something for which we should mourn but rejoice at our privilege and our high calling eternally in him I want to

pray for this thank you precious God for the day of small beginnings it was only a little thing that was birthed in the stable at Bethlehem and yet it already contained all of the things that pertain to the king and I pray for this little thing in which we are caught up together today this seminar so called in these days that it might be a time of birthing the conceiving of holy things first statements and declarations a new quality of apostolic faith that comes by hearing and hearing by the word which is sent Lord brood over us jealously and water and nurture the seed being sown may it take deep root and come forth as a root out of a dry ground a planting of the Lord that will be eternally fruitful I pray blessing on the words which have been given seal it unto our spirits and whatever

we have not understood at the first hearing with our minds may something rise up from within our spirits to the level of consciousness and deep understanding of the kind that profoundly affects our conduct and our

life may we see it as a seed may we see each other in a new light from this night not just as strangers alongside each other sharing a common facility but as together as the church called to eternal purpose may we give ourselves to it sacrificially through the eternal spirit that unto you there might be a glory world without end throughout all ages in Jesus name we pray

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/14/SID14183.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/fren-15-apostolic-foundations-principalities-powers/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net