

Fren-16 Fondements Apostoliques - Caractère Sac

by Art Katz

The apostle's character is a demonstration of the gospel, and is essential for its power and conviction, and is a standard of excellence that cannot be imitated or externally imposed.

Duration: 1:13:20

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 14:9, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, 1 Corinthians 16:13-14, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, Hebrews 10:25, Hebrews 13:8

Topics: "Character"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of godly character as the foundation of the church and our power in ministry. He encourages believers to subscribe to a high standard of holiness and righteousness, following the example of Paul in his dedication to the gospel. The speaker also highlights the need to be aware of the influence of the world and the importance of community in breaking its power over us. He concludes by urging believers to live with a sense of urgency, recognizing that the time is short and we should prioritize our devotion to the Lord.

Transcript

This topic this morning deserves an entire seminar in itself. But we must catch some sense of it. So I would direct you to the first epistle to the Thessalonians.

And the very choice verse there which Paul expresses in different ways throughout his letters. All the more marvelous because he did not know at the time that this was going to become part of the Holy Writ. It's completely unselfconscious and unpremeditated.

And it is for that very reason that it is all the more instructive and powerful. He writes in chapter 1 of verse 5, He writes in chapter 1 of verse 5, Then we prove to be among you for your sake. There's a theme struck in that one verse that needs to penetrate our deepest consciousness.

Our modern life tends to be set in compartments. The secular and the sacred. The religious and the everyday.

Paul did not know these distinctions. He was one true man throughout. The full-orbed man.

That's what an apostle is. He's the thing in himself. It's the word made flesh.

It is truth incarnated in man. That's why Paul could continually offer himself as example. He didn't say follow my principles.

Follow me. God doesn't say that it's the principles of the apostles and the prophets that's the foundation of the church. It is the men in themselves.

What they are in themselves. There's no compartmentalization. There's no place for the professional minister and the private person.

We are one true thing throughout. Day in and day out. If you can just keep your place in Thessalonians and turn to Acts 20.

This is Paul's farewell address to the elders from Ephesus. Again it's a remarkable statement. All the more because it's unpremeditated.

There's no pomp or ceremony with Paul. He is what he is. In season and out.

Always ready. Always appropriate. Before Jews, before Greeks.

Instant in season and out. And here's the remarkable thing. God wants an entire church just like that.

This is very different from the Lutheran lament if I can put it that way. And the Lutheran lament. I'm only human.

God knows I'm only human. Just a sinner being saved by grace. Perhaps you can understand why there was a bloody and violent conflict between the Lutheran church and the Anabaptists of the 16th and the 17th century.

Perhaps you can understand why there was a bloody and violent conflict between the Lutheran church and the Anabaptists of the 16th and the 17th century. This Anabaptist people could not tolerate that kind of pusillanimous excuse. Extraordinaire.

I don't know how much you know of this church history. This was a martyr people. And it was not the world that opposed them so vehemently and viciously.

As much as the established church itself. Because they believed that they should show forth the grace and the testimony of a new life by the Spirit. The church of the blood bought.

Birtherd by the Spirit. By adult conviction of faith. As against a church state system.

By which everyone was inducted by virtue of infant baptism. Most of whom knew not the salvation of God at all. And in some nominal religious way.

Called themselves Christian. And opposed the true faith, the true church. And required of them their blood.

Because they could not tolerate their presence. It was too convicting. They showed forth the radiance of God.

They lived sacrificially. They demanded to see the evidence of the new life in the believer. They expected a kingdom to come.

They saw persecution and suffering as the logical and inevitable consequence of true believing. Can you imagine the clash that came? With this kind of state church entity. The excuse for which was, we're only human.

And something of that yet remains. Something of that yet is in the European church. In its mentality.

Through the inheritance of the reform leaders who did not go far enough. And were themselves most incensed against this Anabaptist presence. We need to come again into their perspective.

That there's a requirement for the demonstration of Christian character. Without which our proclamation is valueless. Paul says that our gospel did not come to you in word only.

But in power and in the full conviction of the spirit. Just as you know what kind of men we prove to be among you for your sake. Can you see the equation here? The power of the gospel in full conviction.

In exact proportion as you know what manner of men we prove to be among you. There is a conjunction between charisma and character that has been lost to our charismatic generation. I would even say that the character precedes the charisma.

That the anointing of God, the holy anointing oil, is not to be poured on men who traffic in God. But that the authority and the power that Paul exhibited are not to be poured on men who traffic in God. But that the authority and the power that Paul exhibited are not to be poured on men who traffic in God.

But that the authority and the power that Paul exhibited are to be poured on men who traffic in God and he says this to the church that was saved by his own witness. You know what manner of men I proved to be among you. I don't have to make any defense of myself.

You yourselves know it, what I proved to be among you for your sake. I don't have time to develop this this morning, but as you search through the epistles of Paul, you'll find mention of only two motives for his apostolic life. For the glory of God, and for your sake, never for his sake.

And in his farewell address in Acts 20, in the 18th verse of that chapter, you know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, you know what manner of men I have consistently been with you, at all seasons, didn't matter whether it was up or down, or good times or bad times, or bounding or abating, there is a precious apostolic consistency of character. There's no place here for human moodiness, or the kind of thing of which we complain, up one day, down the next. What manner of men I have been with you at all seasons, I hope that you're beginning to get the point.

This is something beyond human good intention and will. There's only one way to explain this kind of consistency, and we have to explain it in Paul's own words. For me, to live is Christ.

I know that we have dismissed that. We count it as just kind of a fanciful expression, a kind of apostolic extravagance. But Paul meant it literally.

For me, to live is Christ. In him, his favorite phrase, in him, I move and live and have my being. This is the only answer.

Everything else is an invitation to catastrophe. We cannot seek to be apostolic on the basis of a human determination, every day biting our lips of what we ought to be. We will fail, and we will fail wretchedly.

We have got to find the mystery that Paul found. And it's as available to us as it was to him. But we have not believed the word, and we have not wanted to receive its meaning.

I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live. Yet, not I. There's only one explanation for the phenomenon of Paul.

It is the very continuation of the crucified and resurrected Christ that has found for itself another home and another body. Who is wholly yielded to his life. Who has no life unto himself or for himself.

And can say, for me, to live is Christ. Do you know why we have not stumbled upon this stupefying requirement? Because we have lived beneath the apostolic level. We have not felt that this kind of requirement of character to be incumbent for us.

Therefore, we've been satisfied to be nice guys. Or our standard is the standard of Christian respectability. To be pleasant and polite.

But I want to ask you a question. Is our gospel going forth in the power of the Spirit and in full conviction? Is our gospel going forth in the power of the Spirit and in full conviction? Because Paul says in this first chapter of Thessalonians You know what kind of reception we had with you and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and a true God. Verse 9 I'll tell you just how much power was in his gospel.

Just how full of conviction it was. Sufficient to turn pagans from their idols to serve the living God. How many of us even have this as the criterion in our evangelistic work? Our standards have fallen wretchedly.

We're content if men will only accept Christ. And we're even happy that even after that they'll continue to attend Christian services. But no great requirement is made of them.

We have come into a kind of statistical Christianity. Especially in American evangelism. How many have made decisions and yet remain pagans.

But Paul's gospel had another consequence. It turned men from their idols to serve the living God. Not merely to attend his services.

The whole of our standard and our criteria needs to be elevated again to the apostolic level. For this alone is God's. I want to reiterate my point.

It will never be so. Our gospel will not have that full conviction and power until we become this kind of men. That we proved to be among you for your sake.

There's a certain sense of apostolic selflessness. A whole abandonment to the purposes of God. A mindlessness about one's security, one's condition, one's pleasure.

One can abound, one can abate. It doesn't matter. It's all the same.

He says in Acts 20 that he goes bound in the spirit in verse 22 to Jerusalem not knowing the things that shall befall me there. Except that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city saying what bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me.

I just have to wipe the saliva from my chin. But none of these things move me. Are you seeing this apostolic jewel this morning? This divine character wrought in a man.

Who was originally a persecutor and a murderer. Can you see the eternal purpose of God? It's going to require all eternity to show the kindness of His grace toward us not only in this age but in the ages to come. But none of these things move me.

Are you listening to me this morning children? We shall never have the power and the authority to turn men from their idols so long as we ourselves are moved by a single thing. None of these things move me. He was impervious to things and we need to come into that apostolic condition.

That's what he says in 1 Corinthians 7 But I say brethren that the time is short Let those that have wives be as though they had none they that weep as though they wept not they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not they that buy as though they possessed not they that use this world as not abusing it for the fashion of this world passes away What is the whole purpose of this apostolic exhortation? That you may attend upon the Lord without distraction for the time is short He said that 2,000 years ago but how many of us believe it now?

So much closer to the apocalyptic conclusion that they expected So here's the point that I want to make among other points We need to see restored an entire apostolic atmosphere Not the least of which is the sense of urgency and expectancy of apocalyptic end And this cannot be for us an affectation or a show I mean a real urgency To the point that there's an electric in our atmosphere And that even our children are persuaded that what we are about is eminently real And not just attending services And not just attending worship Because they don't see a different set of parents when they come home from the church that they saw in the church I'm not just talking about the atmosphere in our meetings But the atmosphere that pervades the totality of our life together As an apostolic community

Anticipating the things that shall shortly come to pass And for that very reason indifferent to the fashions and the fads of our generation For the fashion of the world passes away None of these things move me Have you come to the place where you're not moved by things Yes, you can handle them and use them but you're not moved by them Yes, you can handle them and use them but you're not moved by them And if they are removed from you You do not collapse I want to tell you something You'll never come to that apostolic condition by yourself The church is God's provision For the strength, for the prayer and for the support in breaking the powers of the world in the lives of believers Who have the intention together Of coming to that apostolic place Where none of these things move me We need

each other to come to that emancipation And it only comes in the true relationship which true church is Mere Sundays will never provide it I can remember well how it was for me when we first began in community How we gave up a 17 room house with 5 bathrooms And to come to that farm up there in northern Minnesota In a whole radical alteration of our lifestyle And I saw someone behind the wheel of my car driving my car I had thought that it was only a mode of transportation How much are we in self-deception and don't even know it But the shock of someone behind the wheel of my car It was more shocking for me than to see another behind the wheel of my car who was scratching the gears We have no idea how much the world is with us And part of the provision of God through community is to break

the powers of the world that are upon us That our statement in the life in itself to the principalities and the powers is that we cannot be intimidated None of these things move me Neither count I my life Dear unto myself For whom else then is it dear Only for him Remember how Paul said that he groans in this earthly

tent in this tabernacle How much he desires to be in the heavenly But for your sake he is willing to abide in this flesh He is a heavenly man Nothing is dear unto himself That he might finish his course with joy the ministry which he has received up above In verse 10 of the second chapter of Thessalonians You are witnesses and so is God of how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behave toward you believers In verse 10 You are witnesses and so is God There is an extreme

apostolic consciousness of God as witness There is in the apostolic consciousness a consciousness that we cannot be more upright than God is witness The consciousness that before him we are totally transparent in all that we do and think He sees us when we are in public but he also sees us when we are in private He sees us Our life is consciously lived in his sight This is a motivation for blamelessness And you will never be blameless until you have it It is a remarkable effrontery toward God that though we may never say it the way that we conduct ourselves privately and personally is really a statement to the fact that we do not believe that it is being lived in his sight It is amazing the degree of indulgence that we allow ourselves And I'm not just talking about blatant sensual sexual

things fornication or masturbation Although that is sufficient to contradict our entire testimony And to indicate to the principalities and powers of the air that we are not to be feared For there is no consistency in our character in life But I'm speaking about something even yet deeper than that Paul speaks about having a conscience without offense toward God and toward man I'll tell you the kind of indulgence of which we have been especially guilty I think particularly those with a French temperament and mentality And that is to think our own thoughts What do we think when we are free to think our own thoughts And that is to think freely our own thoughts How critical are they?

How selfish are they? How resentful are they? How sensual are they? How ungodly are they? The apostle is the thing in himself Through and through The incarnate word of truth The whole truth and nothing but the truth Even in his private and personal thoughts He is conscious of a God in whose sight he is utterly transparent You are witnesses, he said And so is God How devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behave The apostolic requirement is beyond merely the outward conduct It requires the integrity of the total and the inner man Even in our own thoughts When we are free to think what we will This is truly a man who is bound in the spirit Going on toward Jerusalem It needs to be a description of us I'm not saying these things to bring us under a condemnation But to show you how high is the standard of excellence that God calls apostolic And so it must be For it is the standard that is a plumb line from heaven to earth It is the erect ladder that connects heaven with earth A plumb line and a standard For an unbelieving world Against which all things are to be measured That's apostolic And God's intention for the church in every place So the incentive for holiness and blamelessness is always set in the consciousness of God as a judge That's why Paul could speak with full conviction to the Athenians God has appointed a day in which he will judge all nations I can just see the cold chill coming up the spine of these unbelieving philosophers They have never before heard such a concept But it only requires one hearing When it comes from the lips of an apostolic man Who is not just merely speaking a technicality of doctrine Who is not just merely speaking a technicality of doctrine But awesomely knows the judge That's why Paul says Knowing the terror of God I persuade men It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God How is it that he knows it and we don't?

Does he have a supplement to his Bible?

Not at all He knows it by relationship By the intimacy of his knowledge of God Which is my message for tonight And the deepest of all apostolic requirements We don't even have to speak about what is the

general standard of our present Christianity Alongside of what is being spoken this morning The Church is not yet a witness unto them It is not enough to be a nice guy It is not enough just to avoid the more blatant sins If we are earnest with God There is only one standard for us Apostolic character Nothing less than the character of God himself It cannot be imitated It cannot be externally imposed It can only come in union with him Take my yoke upon you And learn of me Who am meek and lowly of heart I want to ask you this morning Are you yoked with God Or are you a freewheeling

independent agent Comes and goes as you please I'll attend this conference I'll go to that school I'll attend this conference I'll go to that school Are you coming to the meeting tonight I'll see if I feel like it We need to see brought back into our corporate atmosphere these apostolic elements We need to see reintegrated into our atmosphere these apostolic demands The greatest incentive for our blamelessness But the judge whose coming is imminent and at hand Paul says, don't you know that the saints will judge the world Paul says, don't you know that the saints will judge the world Why do you go to the world's courts Do you have some matter of conflict between you Let those who are least esteemed in the church judge it Because don't you know that you're being groomed one day to judge

the world Because don't you know that you're being groomed one day to judge the world Do you know it In 1 Corinthians 4.5 he says, therefore judge nothing before the time Until the Lord comes who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts And then shall every man have praise of God I need a whole hour again just for this one point And then shall every man have praise of God Children, we will never come to apostolic blamelessness Children, we will never come to apostolic blamelessness So long as we are self-conscious of each other And we live out our life in the standard that is established in our relationship only with each other Rather than as a life lived unto God And then shall every man have praise of God We are going to be

required to stand alone often We are going to suffer withering blasts of reproach and criticism And if your praise and esteem is of men you will not stand But if your praise is of God And you can wait for it And then shall every man have praise of God Then will you stand And stand apostolically This power of dependency and looking toward men for confirmation, for support for acceptance and approval needs powerfully to be broken Because there is only one thing that can break it It's the greatest source of approbation of approval that comes only from God For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly with circumcisions of the flesh whose general letter but he is a Jew who is one inwardly whose circumcision is a circumcision of the heart who walks according to the spirit and whose praise and

esteem does not come from men but from God It's not an accident that the most profound the deepest, bravest messages I have ever had to speak publicly for God It's not an accident that the most profound the deepest, bravest messages I have ever had to speak publicly for God have every single time instantly been met by reproach Men coming to me before I could even leave the platform telling me they are prophets sent of God to tell me that I have missed the mind of the Lord I have erred grievously against God done incalculable damage to the body of Christ a stabbing accusation and you need to go back to the microphone and recant and apologize for your message It's a withering blast and if you have lived habitually in the light of the response from men needing their approval you will

collapse There is only one who can stand under such a blast It's a man who lives for one satisfaction only whose praise is not of men but of God We are not going to obtain this in a day but we will not obtain it at all if we do not consciously see it as an object to be desired to move from our present fear of man to the restoration of the fear of God This must be our apostolic goal and mission for which we need the

participation of everyone for we are all in this together Can you see how extraordinary and necessary a requirement true church is That one place in the earth where we need not put on any appearance That one place in the earth where we need not put on any appearance where we can frankly acknowledge our defects and speak to one another the truth in love and exhort one another

daily Next Sunday is already too late While it is yet today Till we all come Into the fullness and stature of Jesus Christ Unto a perfect man Mere Sundays will never accomplish it Exhort one another daily While it is yet today That means a radical alteration of our present lifestyle And the establishing of a whole new set of priorities Apostolic priorities That will make a serious incursion on our privacy On our pleasure On our time On our substance On all Unto him be glory from the church I pray that you are not dilettantes Of the most deceptive kind Wanting to hear some new thing Titillated by apostolic concepts But having no high serious intention To fulfill them It were better for you That you had never been here That you had never heard these things Than to hear them And have no

serious intention Of fulfilling them Paul talks about being found blameless At his coming He says others strive for a corruptible crown But we for an incorruptible This is not poetry For Paul it is absolutely vivid and real For him there is a shameful thing That cannot be considered That he should come before the Lord In all eternity And have not a crown To lay at his feet Is that your motive?

To win a crown? I'll tell you that the crown of glory Shall not exceed the crown of your suffering If you are unwilling For the crown of thorns The trials, the demands The reproaches The sufferings Of what it means to live a heavenly life In an earth that is inhospitable To contend for this life To fight for such a sacrifice You shall have not a crown to lay before Set your affections on the things above Where your treasure is Heaven Is not biblical poetry But the most practical And the real exhortation To be blameless at his appearance The Lord has been dealing with me I'm an American And we think statistically in terms of averages Isn't it enough to have 9 out of 10?

Or 3 out of 5?

Be perfect As your Heavenly Father is perfect There is an absolute and apostolic standard Blameless at his appearance Because if we will not insist upon that We make allowances for ourselves God knows we're only human Heaven knows I'm trying It's blameless Or corruptible We must have this insistence And trust For the grace that will be given That's why the call to us is arise And let your light shine All the more as the thick darkness and gloom Covers the earth Do we have a conscience That is without offense To God and to man Do we have a conscience That is irreproachable Before God and before men I think that you French have an expression for it What a condition to be in To have a conscience Without offense To God or to man It is nothing less than our re-entry Into the Garden of Eden It

is a return to innocence It is to be without guile It is to be as a light in the earth It's God's invitation to us Not only in our outward conduct But what we are inwardly and privately Even in the thoughts that we think When we are free to think what we will This requires the community of the saints Conducive to all these things A community that speaks the truth in love That it might grow up unto Him In all things That's the end of passivity in the church Looking up to the platform While one man conducts the whole service We need to find and make room to speak Face to face Not the back of each other's heads Seeing in each other's faces the glory of God And moving from glory to glory Even as by the Spirit of God What is God's provision for the perfecting of the saints The saints

themselves In true relationship In interaction In confrontation In exhortation Speaking the truth in love We have to return to these daily church realities If we are to grow up unto Him in all things Who is the head, even Christ Paul is not ashamed to say to men frequently Be ye followers of me He says to Timothy To show of my ways which be in Christ As I teach everywhere in every church He says that all things are expedient But He will not be brought under the power of any He reminds us that our bodies are a temple of the Lord The Holy Ghost which is in us And that we are not our own That we are a glorified God in our body And in our spirit Which are God's He reminds us to so run that we might obtain He tells us that every man that strives for the mastery Is temperate in all things Isn't

it remarkable that this is a standard That cuts through every age and every generation The apostolic standard of God in every age is moderation The apostolic standard of God in every age is moderation Whether you eat or whether you drink Or whatsoever you do Do all to the glory of God The ultimate incentive Beyond what men require of us Or even what will satisfy our own standard Do all to the glory of God How we need to do all To His glory It would make life itself a very sacrament Who then could talk of the things that are secular or mundane The ordinary or the eternal The large or the small things If all things are to be done unto the glory of God Even whether you eat or you drink This kind of sacramental living Must be brought back into the church We must be saved from mere expediency

It's not enough if something functions or serves It fulfills the utility or the requirement of the hour That may satisfy the world's requirements But not God's The issue is not whether it functions Do you feed the saints?

Do they have a place to stay? Are they able to be transported from one place to another? We need to see beyond utility To glory In things large and small All for the Lord Be firm Abundant in the work of the Lord Watch Remain firm in the faith Live like men Be strong This is only a little gleaming From the vineyard of Paul Just a chance phrase here and there As it comes to us In the most superficial examination of his epistles But what standard begins to emerge An extraordinary standard An apostolic standard Which he himself walked in and exhibited It's not a mere abstract hope It was fulfilled Follow me Be my imitator It needs to be said again By men and women of our own generation Even something more frightening than that To be able to say with Jesus To an unbelieving world If you see me You see the Father I and the Father are one You want to know what God is like?

See this humility See this uncompromising truth See this integrity See this righteousness See this godly character This is the foundation of the Church And our power and authority in ministry There is not something unrelated to it But all together divinely joined Our gospel came to you in power of the Spirit Full of conviction Sufficient to turn you from your idols To serve the living God For you know what manner of men we proved to be among you For your sake In all seasons How many will subscribe to that standard from this day forward?

If you're serious You know what you'll be able to say with Paul? You'll speak of our gospel The gospel of his grace It will no longer be a word of technicality But the deeply experienced enablement For those who will be holy as he is holy And perfect as he is perfect In the earth In this inhospitable world Ascent with all temptations Let's bow before this God I'm embarrassed, Lord, to be the spokesman for this kind of message The contradictions of my own life are only too apparent But I want to say with all my heart this morning That I desire to be this manner of man In all seasons Knowing that the grace that was available to Paul Is available to me I thank you for your love And your patience Your forbearance That has waited so long upon us You've seen our double standard You've seen our shoddy performance You have been a

judge Lord, you have been a judge And you have observed us in our private and personal moments You know our contradictions But it has not alienated your love You've been gracious to us And even this morning You woo us with your word And call us up to a high mountain apart That we might be like you Not only in our own persons But even in the greater glory The corporate glory The church The apostolic church Bless us, Lord, we pray Feel these things in our hearts May we resist sin unto blood May we despise our own excuses and self-justifications May we realize that there's a standard above the world And beyond our own Or what the present church has given us Or a norm or a standard It's a timeless standard It's eternal in the heavens It shall characterize your church At the end of the age Blameless Full of glory Running the race Winning Having the crown Lord, I'm speaking for this people today Who are saying amen and amen This is our desire And whatever it takes Whatever discipline Whatever chastisement Whatever dealing To flush out our hiddenness and darkness To deal with our indulgences and our habits We welcome it My God, shape us in your image Bring us to that place of love And we might speak the truth to one another And receive that speaking as coming from very God himself And pray for one another Exhorting one another Daily That we might come into this perfection This apostolic character This witness This power That alone can turn this generation from their idols To serve the living God Before the day of your appearing The day of the Lord The day of judgment Which is at hand And shall shortly come to pass Let your work be a quick one We will not cry out and whimper For you are speaking to us not as children But as sons and daughters To be called of God Not only for this generation But for the ages to come Lord, seal these things in our hearts Give us a new resolve and determination To walk worthy of the manner to which we are called To the kingdom And the glory For Jesus' sake In his precious name we pray And God's people say Amen

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