

From Self to Spirit

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon calls for a return to authentic faith and a God-centered perspective, emphasizing the church's role in compassion for Israel amidst suffering.

Duration: 1:15:51

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 3:16

Topics: "Death To Self"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a conversation he had 36 years ago that had a profound impact on him. He shares his anguish and frustration about his Jewish life and the moral collapse of the world. The speaker emphasizes the need for compassion, love, and mercy, not just sentimental condescension. He calls for a war against the flesh and warns against being deceived by outward expressions of worship. The speaker challenges the audience to speak out and not lose their integrity, reminding them that true freedom in Christ is being free from self-concern.

Transcript

Let's see if what was cogent and alive at 3 o'clock this morning is equally alive now. Only if you're a minister of the word will you know what I'm talking about. When the Lord has you up at absurd hours and something comes to life that you're ready then to pour out.

But no, it has to wait until 11.20 and often when you open up to see the thing that was riveting and so powerfully alive in God eight hours earlier has somehow gone flat. And you wondered what were you excited about? And just to add fuel to the fire, the Lord does not allow me to open again the Bible or the thing that I was seeing until the actual time of speaking. So Lord, Lord, quicken and make alive what was so vital in my spirit in the early morning hours while these saints were turning over and enjoying their rest.

You were stirring my spirit. Come and stir it again. We want to hear the now present truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

So I'm asking the miracle of proclamation and the miracle of hearing. Ruin us, Lord. Give us something this morning that will devastate us for all the future.

We cannot go on as we were before. Bring us back to the early, original, pristine, authentic, apostolic reality that made the church the church. It's time.

Disabuse us of any notion, thought, disposition that has become current, popular, attractive, and all the rest that is in any way in opposition to that which was at the first and needs to again be at the end. Be with my mouth, Lord. Speak to this congregation, but through them and beyond them, out to many in comparable situations who need this word.

And we thank and give you praise for it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, there's one text that I can't get away from.

It's like a jewel. I'm holding it up to the light, and I see this glint. And I turn it this way, and there's another facet.

It's Psalm 102. And I'm not going to labor long in it. I wish I had about two hours.

One hour for the psalm itself, and another hour for the commentary that the Lord has been stirring. But one of the advantages of hearing me is to learn how to read the psalms. You know that there's reading and reading? You know that there's faith and faith? You know that there's love and love? You know that there's reality and reality? There's a shallow and an authentic.

There's a seeming, an appearing, and an actual. Maybe what ought to distinguish the church is its intense jealousy for the authentic. It's discontent with anything that appears to be but is not.

It will not accept a closeness. It wants the real thing in itself. And I feel, probably with real justification, that the church at large has been guilty of misreading the scriptures.

We have brought our propensity to read gone with the wind into the holy writ. My mother is a terrible example of this, but she's not a believer. She's just an old Jewish lady who checks out eight romance novels a month from the local library in large print edition and gobbles them up.

Erotic and all. Ninety-five years old. We Jews die hard.

And so I give her a psalm to read. I said, you've got to read this. This is what the Lord has quickened.

We've just come from the prayer time. The Lord took this out of my devotional time. I shared it.

It was a blessing. Read this. And then she reads past it, three, four, five psalms beyond it in about 15 minutes.

As if something is grievously wrong with your reading. Well, if you'll read Psalm 102, the first part of it, the first 11 verses, sounds like a man speaking from a concentration camp. It's a cry.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble. Incline thy ear unto me in the day when I call.

Answer me speedily for my days are consumed like smoke. And my bones are burned as in the hearth. This is a cry of a man in absolute destitution.

Not unusual when I speak. The gods of technology hate my guts. And I'm not all that enthused over them either.

When you hear this, don't think that this is an echo of the Nazi time. You would be in a better place of reality to think of it as a time yet future. That there will be men crying out like this at a future time, coming

to the same affliction under the same circumstances of attrition, devastation, and death in concentration camps prepared for annihilation.

That's not even polite to say on a Sunday morning. But it's true. Jews are slated and scheduled for another time of suffering.

It's called the time of Jacob's trouble. And Jews will be crying out just like from this psalm, though without the faith of this psalmist. For my days are consumed like smoke and my bones are burned as in a hearth.

My heart is smitten and withered like grass so they forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin. I'm like a pelican of the wilderness.

I'm like an owl of the desert. It's interesting that when I went to one of the concentration camps in Czechoslovakia, and I've been to them all over, Poland, wherever I can, Treblinka in Poland, Auschwitz. I've been to Dachau in Germany.

Every opportunity I go, if I'm in anywhere in proximity, I'll visit the concentration camps. And in this particular one, there was an owl emblazoned over the door that led into the ovens. I don't know what it is about owls, but if you have any in your house as decoration, think twice about it.

It's an ominous bird. You're much better off with doves. I'm like an owl of the desert.

I watch them as a sparrow alone upon the housetop. My enemies reproach me all the day, and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. They rage against me.

So what do we understand from this? This is not a man in a momentary place of difficulty, but he's evidently under the dominion or authority and oppression of a continuous oppressor. They're mad against me. They rage against me.

They have me as an object of derision. I'm in some kind of confinement. I can't escape from this.

They reproach me all the day. See how you have to read this? You have to understand what's being implied, what's being sketched here in the poetry that a psalm is. Because of thine indignation and thy wrath, thou hast lifted me up and cast me down.

My days are like a shadow and decline, and I am withered like grass. Well, the remarkable thing about this statement is that the victim understands that he's not the object of some caprice or arbitrary condition, but that God himself is the author of his suffering. When Jewry, when Israel, when the Church will understand the total sovereignty of God and accede to it, it will have come into the place of God's desire.

He's either the Lord over all, or he's the Lord over nothing. And to dismiss our afflictions, our sufferings, our accidents, our broken marriages, our church conflicts, the issues of the world, the eruptions in Israel, as somehow happenstance, chance, caprice, and not to understand that there's a Lord brooding over it all from the throne of heaven in complete sovereignty, waiting for the acknowledgment that he's God, will continue to suffer these afflictions. So look at this, verse 10, because of thine indignation, somehow this victim has intuited that the degree of his suffering is the measure of his sin, that this is not happenstance, this is an exact proportionate thing that I deserve.

I'm out of kilter with God, and have been for generations, like my father, so am I also. And you have been patient and forbearing and waiting for the acknowledgment of our iniquity, and it has not come. Rather, we

have celebrated ourselves and see ourselves as virtuous, and point to our malefactors as somehow being the cause of our problems.

It's the other guy, and not recognizing that you're wanting an acknowledgment from us. But thou, O Lord, because of thine indignation and thy wrath, what? You have a God who can get mad? I thought he was nice, I thought he was loving. This is a whole other perspective about God, that we're going to find it difficult to reconcile with the sappy, saccharine-sweet, sugary confection that we have created for our benefit, and called it Jesus.

Those dumb-dumbs last night at the university, and I'm trying to be polite, referring to the Islamic opposition that came, well, we believe in God, don't you know that Allah means God? So therefore, we have God, you have God. You just have another name, we have another name. But it's God, oh yeah? Where's the evidence, you murderous, vicious culprit? Given the opportunity, you'd skin the flesh off my bones if you could.

This supposed civility that you express is only the politic expedient of being on a campus. If we were on the West Bank someplace, or in Gaza, I'd be a dead man before I could count ten. Don't give me this stuff.

My God, your God, same God, we just call him Allah, you call him... I said, you know what? There are those who call God Jesus, who have no more knowledge of God than you. Merely putting an appellation, and a title, and a word upon something doesn't constitute the knowledge of God as God. It's when you know that you're suffering because of indignation, and his wrath, and his anger, that you're getting warm.

What, we have the right to be indignant, and God does not? We can get mad over some petty thing, and God is imperturbable, and some kind of distant and fuzzy, ambiguous deity? Hey, he's entitled to as much anger and indignation as you. And has more reason for it. He's mad at you, he's angry with the sinner every day.

He's sick to the teeth of sappy Christendom. And he's going to express it. And with his Jewish people, and their flaky Judaism, and social concern, and ethical and moral sensibility, they're no better off, and no more righteous than these Muslims themselves.

They deserve each other, and they're getting each other. There's no man righteous, no, not one. If God could express his indignation and anger, we'd all go up like a puff.

But I appreciate that this psalmist is interpreting his distress in the context of God. Better to err, believing that, than you should err thinking it's only accident, or it's the other guy, or it's Hitler, or it's the PLO, or it's Arafat. Better to think first, it's the consequence of my own sin.

That God is judging. Even to bring my flesh as skin, hanging on my bones like a smoke, and a vapor, and I can't even eat. Is how far God will go to bring me to the truth about himself.

Because if I go into eternity in this foggy mishmash that I think is God, that has served my purpose as Jesus the errand boy, who has brought me a boyfriend, girlfriend, health, and prosperity, I'm in for a rude awakening. Better to be awakened on this side of eternity than the other, when there's no prospect for alteration at all. Those sappy Muslims that were there last night, I pleaded for their souls.

I put it right into their teeth. I gave them every opportunity to recognize truth, and respond, and call upon the name of the Lord. But no, at the end of the whole thing, they just wanted to be disputatious, and

represent their interests.

Poor saps. They'll agonize eternally for the missed opportunity. The misused occasion that came in the mercy and love of God.

And I haven't come to my point yet. Verse 12 is the turning point of this psalm. But thou, O Lord.

Verse 11. My days are like a shadow that declines, and I'm withered like grass. I'm a vapor.

I'm here today. I'm gone tomorrow. What are my years? What a moment.

But thou, O Lord. That's what God is waiting for. But thou.

Listen to this. I'm just going to review the personal pronouns employed by the psalmist until we get to verse 12. I've mocked them last night, or early this morning, in yellow mocking pen.

My prayer. My cry. I am in trouble.

Turn the ear unto me. I call. My days.

My bones. My heart. My bread.

My groaning. My bones. I am.

I am like an owl. I watch. I am a sparrow.

My enemies. Me. They're sworn against me, for I have eaten ashes.

I, I, I, me, me, me. I, I, I, me, me, me. But thou, O Lord.

Whew. I thought you'd never get to it. You're drowning in personal pronouns as if you are the center of creation, and the end-all and the be-all of all things.

You poor, egocentric sap. But thou, O Lord, is the beginning of wisdom and righteousness and true living. Get away from that filthy false center of I, I, I, and me, me, me.

And get to thou, O Lord. I'm a vapor, but thou, O Lord. You endure forever.

And thy remembrance unto all generations. Thou shalt arise. Hallelujah.

And have mercy upon Zion. For the time to favor, yes, the set time is come. For all of the harsh things I've said about Israel and the Jew, who knows them better than one who is? They're not going to deliver themselves from the extremity into which they have fallen, and which is the logic of their own godless life.

In attempting to establish a nation independent of its God. In attempting to possess the land independent of his covenant. They're getting into a trap that they, of which is their own making.

They have rubbed their neighbors raw. They have had to trample upon the rights of others. The Lord has set this.

What a trap. That in coming out of the Holocaust, so desiring and needing and the world agreeing, time for a homeland of their own. But it's got to be carved out of a place where these Muslims and Arabs have had

centuries of existence.

How do you do that without jarring the sensibilities of those who have preceded you? Without infringing upon their rights. Without appropriating their land. Without exacerbating this Islamic Arab temper that doesn't take all that much to be made hateful, spiteful, vindictive and full of vengeance.

And will not be satisfied with a peace agreement. It wants you out. And it wants you out devastated and humiliated.

That's its very nature. God could not have brought us Jews to a more intractable enemy than Islam. Than the Arab mindset and hatred.

That Ishmaelic hatred of Isaac that is pervasive and enduring to the end. See what you're going to do with this, Hotshot. With your logic, your reason and your inducements that if they put aside their vindictive intentions, we can share the prosperity of the Middle East together.

Come on. Why don't you act in your own best self-interest? This is not going to do you nor us any good. To have war and threat.

Let's put down our arms and let's make this one of the most prosperous sections of the world. We have the hi-fi, we've got the technique, we've got the mentality, we've got the wherewithal. You guys can really prosper if you put aside this vengeful desire for retribution and vengeance.

Come on. This is in your own self-interest. Don't you know that man lives by his enlightened self-interest? He's rational.

Don't you know? No, they don't know. They're living by demonic power. And these Jews think that man lives by his rational best self-interest because that's what we would do.

And so we would assume that's what they would do. We do not understand man. Man is not rational.

Men will die and be living bombs and go into Jerusalem marketplaces wired to explode. So long as they can take down 20 and 30 Jews with them, they'll count it a privilege so to die and be blown to smithereens because there's a heaven up there with 70 virgins waiting to receive them. These Jews don't know what man is because they don't know what they are.

Because they don't know who God is. So if any help comes to this people, it will not be through anything that they can engineer. They're showing their bankruptcy, their confidence in reason, logic, self-interest, arms, the arm of flesh, strength, the air force, the atomic arsenal.

It will avail them nothing. They'll come a set time when their deliverance will come by God out of Zion. Because they've got to know that God is their savior.

They've got to know that they can't save themselves. That their self-sufficiency is a pitiful and inadequate substitute for the reality and power of God. But here's the key thing, saints.

When has the set time come? When is God going to arise and spring out and show himself and intervene and break the power of death and loose the captives and establish an Israel that is an Israel indeed? That will be a glory to his name. That the representatives of all nations can come up every feast of tabernacles and pay homage to the God of Israel who has saved the nation out of death and established it and allowed

it to prosper. When is that going to take place? Because it's the consummation of history.

It's the end of the age. And evidently Israel will have nothing to do with it herself. She's down and out.

Her skin will cling to her bones. Her flesh will be a smoke. It's when the set time to favor Zion has come.

When is that time? When his servants shall have pity upon her stones and compassion upon her dust. Oh, I need another two hours at least. Who are these servants? Servant sons.

Not Israel. Israel is not in the servant posture. It cannot be until it's raised from the dead.

It's in the self posture. I, I, me, me. To be a servant is to have broken the power of that egocentrism and know that your whole life is for another.

Him. Evidently, while Israel is in this distress, there are such a people in the earth who are servants. And God is waiting for something in them to be released, to arise, to save and deliver Israel out of its vexation.

What, what is the set time? What is God waiting for? When my servants shall have compassion. In her stones and pity on her dust. What do you mean? Are we the servants, Lord, of the church? Well, not the church as it presently is.

Not the church in its great number. Because the church in its present condition is not in a servant posture. Oh, it's interested in Israel and might even make a trip.

And plant a tree and attend the Feast of Tabernacles conference and come back with giddy excitement and souvenirs. And that will affect nothing. It's not sentiment that God is waiting for.

That's flesh. He's waiting for the deepest spirit response of a kind that only God himself can make. For to have compassion on her stones and pity upon her dust is to have the response of God himself.

In his own compassionate heart and his own mercy for a people who have been reduced to stubble in judgment. These stones and this dust is not the statement of archaeology. It's the statement of judgment.

Mark my words, saints. You're either hearing a false prophet or a true. But every present day modern city of Israel.

From Jerusalem to Haifa to Tiberias to Ashkelon. Every city will be reduced to rubble and to ruin. And the world will delight itself at that time and rub its hands in glee.

They had it coming. They wouldn't negotiate. They were too stubborn.

They allowed the world to be threatened by their intransigent intractable attitudes. They forced this crisis. They brought it upon themselves.

They deserved it. Let them suffer. I'll tell you what.

Under the veneer of civility that is the world. There's a palpitating thing waiting to break loose that is called hatred against the Jew. Don't think you're exempt.

You don't even know your own heart. Wait till you're tested. Wait till the whole climate of opinion comes over these nations and this nation like a blanket.

Do you think that you're going to be the sore thumb? The standing out? That you'll not succumb? That you'll not be moved by the climate of opinion that prevails as it came over Germany? In the Nazi time? Where was the culture then? Where was Goethe and Fichte, Hegel and Schichte and Kant and Wagner and Mozart and music and culture and ethics and philosophy then? Went up like a puff as everyone came under the national hatred against the Jew. It's resident in virtually every Gentile. What, haven't you gone to school with Jewish kids? And watched them get straight A's without a beat of sweat? While you break your head to pass? Don't tell me you're not envious.

And don't tell me if we have a national crisis of an economic collapse and Jews will be blamed for it because they're in the strategic economic positions. Who's the head of the Federal Reserve, the Treasury, Greenspan and Rubin and wherever you look these guys are proliferated in key economic places of control. It's a Zionist conspiracy, it's a Jewish takeover.

The Holocaust was a fraud calculated to give Israel the possession of the state. It doesn't take much to persuade the shallow and the disgruntled who can't get their gas for their Sunday driving. And look for a simplistic answer to their predicament which Jews have always provided.

The only one who can be exempt from the hatred against the Jew that will billow out all over the world in every nation are the servant people of God. And while the world hates these Jews and they're not all that attractive, well, take a look. This strange servant people will have a remarkable affinity for them.

And it won't be schmaltzy sentimentality because they're cute, they're not going to be cute at this time. They're not going to be cute when they're in concentration camps or fleeing persecution and coming down your dirt streets in the back sections of Stillwater as refugees with tattered shirts on their backs and stinking and unbathed and not being fed and uprooted and disconcerted and wondering what hit us in the land that was our safety and our refuge and our place of prosperity suddenly and overnight and going to come to you in that condition, not at all grateful and believing that their predicament is because of Christianity. Because of the anti-Semitic references in the New Testament.

Because the church has always been anti-Semitic. The Crusaders with the crosses and the tunics, da-da-da-da-da-da-da. How are you going to respond? How are you going to receive them? Who will be disagreeable? We're tough when we're at our best, what about when we're at our worst? What a test for the church that has historically failed that test.

Where its greatest giants like Luther have failed it. Like Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed orator. The great apostolic giants that have succeeded Paul were invariably anti-Semitic.

But you're going to do better? What have you got that they don't have? You're going to do better than Luther? You better. And that brings me to my subject. The subject is the Spirit of God.

As the expression of the resurrection life of the resurrected and ascended King. To receive that Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is not merely to receive a charismatic charge. That's going to give a little lilt to our services and an adornment to our denominations.

To receive the Spirit of Christ is not only to receive enablement, it's to receive character. It's to receive the essence. The Spirit is the essence of something.

What is the essence of God? What are the quintessential derivatives? What is he made of? What is his awesome reality? It's compassion. It's love. It's mercy.

Not this sappy bear hug stuff love. The love that can bear with the unattractive and the unlovable. It's a love that not only clocks its tongue that poor Israel has had to suffer the devastation of her cities.

But identifies with that nation. And embraces their suffering and is one with them in their affliction. This is more than sentimental condescension.

This is nothing less than being of the same stature and kind and temper as very God himself. And what will we do to obtain that? We have to have a war on against the flesh. In all of its variable forms, however attractive.

Hey, I could hardly keep my feet from dancing this morning. I wanted to be a dancer once upon a time. About 30 or 40 pounds ago.

And I still have a little vestige left that certain kinds of music can get me going. You know what I have to do? I have to avoid that kind of music. I have to avoid reading Tom Wolfe, Thomas Wolfe.

The great novelist from South Carolina that I stumbled upon as an adolescent reading adventure books. Raphael Sapatini, *The Seahawk*. And I came across a book in the library called *Of Time and the River*.

I thought it was an adventure story. And once I opened its covers and began to drink from its content, I was a goner. The depth of that man.

The power of his writing. The intensity of his search and quest. This man who is staggering in the world trying to find his way in understanding.

I read everything that Thomas Wolfe has ever written. And it's on my bookshelf now. And I have not opened it since I've been a believer.

I'm afraid to. I don't dare allow myself. Because my soul and my flesh will be quickly stirred to embrace and to be moved away from the realm of spirit.

Most of us are in such a condition that we can't even discern the one from the other. If our feet get to tapping and we can do that in the name of the Lord and have a lyric that goes with it that seems to celebrate him, we think we are in the spirit. I'd be much more persuaded if we pulled the plug out of the amplifiers and the overhead projector and had no instrumentation at all and sat there like a bunch of dummies without a worship leader.

And if we are worshipers and have reason to worship because of the great grace that has come to us daily and last night at the university and wheresoever, something will well up. Something will break forth, cracked, off key, out of tune, but heavenly. It'll be in the spirit.

Listen to this German theologian whom I have avoided for the longest time, Albert Schweitzer, because I accepted the misrepresentations about him not having read him myself. Praise God that Reggie bought the book and brought it with him because he's not going to get it back. That's the kind of guy I am.

That's the kind of guy I'd like you to be. When I was in Germany years ago sitting in the study of an American chaplain whose wife was German and her mother was sewing up my torn pants, I'm sitting in my BVDs feeling the cool draft and looking at the bookshelves. What else is there to look at? It's the first thing when I come into a person's home is I want to see what they're reading.

What's in their bookshelves tells me more about them than any other single thing. I'm looking over these titles and all of a sudden my eye falls on one title. When I saw that title, I resolved in myself, I'm not leaving this place without that book.

If I have to step over that man, if I have to ram and batter, I'm not leaving. You say, what was the title of it? The Crucified God by Jürgen Moltmann. A man who came out of World War II from Russian prisons as a defeated German soldier and studied theology.

And he said, no theology would be acceptable to us who have suffered the Siberian blasts and the Arctic winters and the Russian vehemence against us and their camps except a theology predicated on the cross. The Crucified God, I knew that Jesus was crucified, but did I understand who he was and is in that crucifixion. That it's God suffering on that cross.

I left with that book. No one would dare stop me. I since made it up to him, of course.

Now Schweitzer says, the possession of the spirit proves to believers that they are already removed out of the natural state of existence and transferred into the supernatural. Oh, dear saints, we have another at least another hour left. I was sitting in a fellowship in Denmark, my wife's country, the creature comfort country.

The world can be coming to an end. They'll still have coffee at four o'clock. They'll still have the raisin bread and this cake glazed with chocolate.

And they have the same curtains and creature comfort. It was my wilderness time. And I'm in the service.

I'm going to be the speaker. I have no message. Of course, I'm sitting waiting and the people are coming in and I'm looking at them in a strange way.

And my first words when I got up to speak was. Why are you mere men? Why are you mere men? I was struck as you were coming into that church and taking your seats that you're only mere men. You're only natural men.

Something's wrong. You're mere men. You're natural.

You've just come to associate for the benefit of a service. But where is the transcendence? Where is the heavenly? First the earthly. Then the heavenly.

First the natural. Then the spiritual. But haven't.

Isn't it time for the heavenly and for the spiritual? Why are you yet mere men? Why do you think like mere men and act like mere men and look like mere men? Where is your angelic countenance? Where's the radiance of the Lord? Where's the transcendent quality with which you should be infused and demonstrate not just on Sunday. But when any demand be made upon you and you oppress the squish issues in God. My dear sister was concerned for me this morning.

Aren't you tired, aunt? Not at all. Why should I be tired when it's the Father who doeth the works? So I was up between two and five. And my sleep is sporadic.

And the first days here in Stillwater there was no sleep at all. So I'm in the third day of the fast. So what? My Lord, I can leap over hedges and overcome troops in the strength that I feel and out of which I'm

speaking this morning, which is God.

I'm not boasting in myself, saints. But we prophetic men are called not to proclaim but to demonstrate the thing in itself. What is apostolic? What is prophetic? And if we don't know that, let's shut up the building and go home.

That's the foundations of the church. It's the thing in itself. Paul had his citizenship in heaven.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, no man ascends who has not first come down, even the Son of Man who is in heaven. Well, there's the Son of Man talking to Nicodemus in Jerusalem. How can he be in heaven? Because that's how he was talking to Nicodemus.

From the heavenly vantage point, he wasn't answering that man's questions in an earthly, natural way. Step one, step two, step three, how to get saved. But he spoke in mysteries.

You must be born again of the Spirit. What? Must I through a second time go through my mother's womb? You dumb, dumb. If I'm speaking to you earthly things, how will you understand heavenly? And you're a leader in Israel? You don't know step one.

Jesus didn't answer him from the earthly, human, religious plane. He answered him from the heavenly plane and left the man completely bewildered. For the heavenly will always offend the earthly and jar it.

But there's more hope for a man jarred from heaven and left in perplexity by heavenly response than there is a man being told step one, how to get saved, brother. Praise God that those who encountered me in my crisis 36 years ago as a disarrayed Jew whose ideologies and philosophies have failed, spoke to me from heaven. That German man that picked me up off the side of the road with a brand new car and as I had stood three hours in the rain, a sogging mess, angry, and stopped for me as cars whizzed by and people just somehow didn't notice my existence.

He stopped and didn't just give me the wave like, come on, I'm doing you a favor. He got out of the car and greeted me as if I was doing him the favor. I thought, this guy's got to be a homo.

I may be wet, but I'm still attractive. Far from it. He was an angel from heaven.

And he put me on the front seat and threw my rucksack on the back seat and messed up his upholstery and didn't even notice. What manner of man is this? And off we drove and he turned and looked at me. I'm a man 34 years old.

It's past the tourist season. I'm not a kid out on a lock. He said to me in German, why are you traveling like this? And so well as I could, I tried to explain.

I said, look, I'm a modern man. If any man is modern, it's us Jews. We are modernity itself.

We have shaped this world. We have given it its Karl Marx's and its Sigmund Freud's and its Albert, its Einstein's. We have made this world.

We have given you the movie makers and the Charlie Chaplins who is Jewish and Steven Spielberg and the writers and Eric Fromm and you name it, culture heroes. We're small but influential. We have shaped this modern world and it's a disaster.

And I'm suffering that catastrophe. I'm a living piece of a man, broken, a modern man, broken at his foundations looking for the answers to life, thinking that they must be philosophical. What else is there? The man insisted that we stop.

I said to him, and I'm also Jewish. He said, Katz, you dope. What does he have to know that for? That will turn him off surely.

And I looked cautiously to see his face drop and the man was just pouring out light. He was excited. It was like someone had flipped the switch.

The neon light went on to learn that I was a Jew. He's excited about me being a Jew. I've been one for 34 years.

I was never excited. What's he excited about? Does it mean something to him that it doesn't mean to me? For me it was a perplexity growing up in Brooklyn, New York, in asphalt and bricks, and wondering how I'm related to some nomadic people back there in the desert areas of the Middle East. What does that mean? Forced fed and compelled to go to Hebrew school and recite a bar mitzvah that my mother can cry a few crocodile tears and feel like she's done her Jewish duty.

What does it mean? It meant something to him. He insisted we stop for refreshments at his expense. And what a conversation.

My God, I remember it to this day 36 years later. Golden conversation. What did he say, Art? He didn't say all that much.

But what a listener. How he drew my heart out. How I shared with him what I'd never shared with closest friends, my ex-wife, anyone, intellectual colleagues, the anguish and frustration of my Jewish life.

The sense of the peril of the world, the moral collapse, the coming atomic catastrophe. There's no answer. And finally everything was out of me.

I was limp-looking. Glib, it'sy-bitsy John 3.16 quotations, but to provoke the questions, what must I do to be saved? Men springing in, calling for a light and trembling when they see in you such a faith, such a confidence, such a joy in your suffering. You know what the world needs, Art? No, I don't know.

I had my arms folded over my chest. I would have scared you to death. You're scared now and I'm a believer.

And so, he had double dare you to tell me what the world needs, because I know that's what we're dying. We're dying for what the world needs. And he said with that same quiet confident voice, that one line that saved me out of death and hell.

Art, what the world needs is for men to wash one another's feet. And down I went. Oh, I remained sitting with my arms folded over my chest, looking arrogant and contemptuous, but my human spirit had fallen out of my body and was whimpering on the floor.

That one statement exploded. I had never heard it before. I never read about washing feet.

I had never read the Bible, old or new. I was a Jewish illiterate. Wash one another's feet, my God.

Oh, I pictured the hotshot art cats of the world who are going to save it by destroying it, washing the feet of their enemies. We were teachers who were in opposition with the administrators, washing the feet of the administrators. Palestinians, washing the feet of Jews.

White men, washing the feet of black men. Oklahomans, washing the feet of Indians. There's power in that humility.

I thought, this is another spirit. And that spirit can save the world. We don't need another program.

We don't need another socialism. We don't need another ideology. We need a spirit of humility that will wash one another's feet.

If this guy had said, Are you saved, brother? Do you know Jesus? You know where I'd be today, folks? Dead. I'd be dead if that man gave me religious clichés and convenient little scriptures that he could quote. He spoke the one thing calculated to break my heart because he spoke from the God who knew my heart and knew my history and set me up for that one moment that he should have the set time to favor this piece of Zion.

It came out of a man's mouth. That one word. I left that night.

He went on to talk to me about the gospel of Jesus Christ in German. And I wanted to protest and say, Hey, I'm Jewish. That's not for me.

That's for the Goyim. That's for the Gentiles. That's their God.

We have our God. But I had no voice. I couldn't protest.

I just had to hear him out. And when he finished, I knew I'm hearing the words of spirit and of life. When I left that night, you would have thought, This man's drunk.

I didn't walk out of that place. I staggered out. It was a confrontation with God.

Heaven had come down to earth in a man. And I've never seen him again. Oh, I cherished his address.

I had it in my wallet. And of course, I got pickpocketed my first day in Egypt and lost it. And I've been back again and again to that area in Switzerland.

Do you know a man by the name of Edwin? He's a bookkeeper. He works for an automobile agency. He sings in the choir.

He knows about architecture and art. He knew the giant Duret. He knows about Carl Jung.

He's a man with a breadth of culture and background. Do you know such a man? No, never heard of one. No, no Edwin, no Edwin, no Edwin, no Edwin.

Was he a man? Or an angel? And until the world asks that question about us, we're not yet the people of the Spirit in the resurrection mode. We're earthly, all-too-earthly, natural, all-too-natural, religious, all-too-religious, predictable and all-too-predictable. Heaven, more heaven.

While we're in Jerusalem, we have our existence in heaven. While we're in still water, our essential reality is in heaven. It's possible, saints.

Not only possible, it's God's definitive intention. The possession of the Spirit proves the believers they are already removed out of the natural state of existence and transferred into the supernatural. They are in the Spirit, which means they are no longer in the flesh.

You can't have it both ways, one or the other. For the Spirit and the flesh are at enmity, one with the other. May God give us the ability to recognize the flesh in its most subtle depiction, which is religious, charismatic, enjoyable, and all other kinds of things that titillate us and move us, but are yet flesh.

Flesh is not always that evident. It's not always that conspicuously evil or threatening. It's the subtlety of the flesh.

It's the acceptable forms of it. It's the way in which the whole Church is condescended to embrace it. This enables us to even distinguish it.

It's because we do not hate the flesh, because it's comforting, because it's enjoyable. That we're saps, that we're so easily taken in and seduced. To fight for the Spirit as against the flesh is to fight, is to be jealous for the Spirit, is at enmity with the flesh, and the one is opposed to the other.

Would you recognize the flesh if it came in a seeming harmless mode? If it came gratuitous and acting nice and wanting to do good things? Don't you know that the greatest opposition to that which is perfect is that which is good? Are you just as vehemently opposed to what is good as you are to what is evil? Because you're so jealously insistent in what is perfect and from above? For every good and perfect thing must come down from above. Every good and perfect thing, including this morning's speaking. Every.

Are you attuned to that which comes down from above? Do you shut off that which seeks to arise from below and even come up through your humanity, through your mind, through your well-meaning intentions? What tree are you eating from? The knowledge of good and evil? Because it has good consequences, seems to do good things? It's death. They are in the Spirit, which means they are no longer in the flesh. For being in the Spirit is only a form of manifestation of being in Christ.

Oh, thank you, Albert Schweitzer. Thank you, my dear brother, for this book written in the first decade of the 20th century that puts all of the hot-shot faith preachers and modern-day icons blows them out of the picture. This statement, to be in the Spirit, is to be in Christ.

In Him we live and have our being. And when those Jews come who are calculated to rub us raw and aggravate us and antagonize us in their ingratitude, and we're taking risks for them because the atmosphere is so totally anti-Semitic that anyone caught aiding a Jew will end up in a concentration camp with them, just as it happened with the Kore-ten booms of the Nazi time. And you're extending yourself at risk and endangering your children and suffer their ingratitude? They don't even say thanks and turn their noses up? They don't like what you're feeding them? Where's their gratitude? Don't they realize? Well, if that's the way they're going to be, that's the natural man reacting out of the flesh.

But to be in Christ is to be crucified and pray for those who are doing you in. It's to be railed against and not railed back. It's to say, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

It's to have something so transcendent, so unearthly, so unnatural that is God in compassion and love and mercy. And when you see that from Gentiles, they're finished. You know what we expect from you? The best that we expect from you? Is your tense, screwed-up, religious face under obligation, I guess I got to.

That's the best we expect. The worst we expect is that you'll do us in like your Gentile forebears before you. You're not to be trusted.

But one will see in your pug-nosed gentility the graciousness of God. One will see heaven come out of your earthly friends. When we know that we're testing you and you still show forth magnanimity, mercy, love, compassion, patience and forbearance, we're finished.

For that is our God. And you're demonstrating Him to us as Jews who don't know Him and we're moved to jealousy. Your services never did it.

And your bizarre campuses and the horrendous architecture never did it. And all of that hot-shot-ism that characterizes our charismatic generation has turned us off. We turned the dial off on the Jimmy's whatchamacallits long before you ever knew that they were in sin.

We sensed right away their phoniness, their pretense, their theatricalness. We Jews have an instinct for what is authentic. And while you're supporting those adults and giving them a lifestyle like Roman emperors, we Jews have turned the switch off on the TV set.

We won't even look at them. And later on their lifestyle has done them in. But when we'll see our God in you, in the moment of duress, in the moment when we expect you to be irritated, expect you to be chafed, expect you to be resentful, and you still, despite that provocation, show forth a love, don't you know that we're irritating? What's with you? This love is unconditional.

We can't break through. We can't get you to say, Uncle, we want you to show that you're natural, that you're just like us, and that your Christianity is only a facade, an externality, a superficial overlay. But however much we probe you, and we Jews, and that has been our calling through the centuries, is to test the church.

We cannot get you to reveal anything other than God. You're in the Spirit. You're in the Resurrection.

It's a mode of being. You haven't taken a deep breath to pass the crisis of this moment. You're just exhibiting what has been conditionally, characteristically, and essentially always your mode of being.

You're the people of the Spirit, and the people of the Resurrection, and no test will ever reveal otherwise. And you didn't come to this condition in a moment. You fought the battle of faith.

You were at war against the flesh. You insisted on the primacy of the Spirit, and you lived continually in it. For those who are led by the Spirit, these are the sons and daughters of God.

And it's not going to lead you into comfortable paths, and human approval, and men patting you on the back, and giving you the B'nai B'rith Man of the Year Award. You'll be an enemy. You'll be looked upon as an opponent.

You'll even be called anti-Semitic. You'll go to Israel, wanting to cry out a warning of the catastrophe to come, and there'll not be one Messianic fellowship or ministry that will offer you a platform to share that necessary word. You'll be called a false prophet.

And an enemy. Because in their fleshly carnal minds, what else can you be, if you're speaking of imminent catastrophe and disaster? If you really loved Israel, you'd be much nicer. You'd be saying, peace, peace, even when there is no peace.

But to predict catastrophe, you're an enemy. Off with his head. Stone him.

Being in the Spirit is a form of manifestation of being in Christ. It's the same state. As a consequence of being in the Spirit, believers are raised above all limitations of being in the flesh.

My God! This is a German theologian? Believers are raised above all the limitations of the being in the flesh. Aren't you tired, aren't you? You ought to be. No, I'm not.

I'm raised above that limitation. And I'm 71. And I have a kidney condition.

I don't know what else. You're raised above the limitations of the flesh, of your mortality, of your body, of your mind. You're brought into a transcendent place.

Your thoughts are heavenly, different, other. You don't recite the conventional wisdom. Would to God I had students like that when I was an atheistic history teacher who didn't just give me answers in order to get an A, knowing what the teacher wants, but gave me an answer from heaven to the great questions I gave for essays that as I read it and lost my eyesight reading blab and conventional blah that kids have learned to produce in order to get grades, to be promoted.

If I had read one essay that had its origin from heaven coming out of a 15-16 year old girl, I would have been saved. But it never came. Only the conventional, expected, humanly, contrived, earthly answers.

They didn't know to seek the Lord of Heaven. It was not their place of abode. They were Christians, but the world was too much with them and they were in the earth and in the flesh and could not give any other kind of answer to an unbelieving Jewish atheist who would have perished, but not for the mercy of God.

So much for being a nice Christian girl in school. Nice is not nice enough, folks. And the spirit of the new covenant comes into being.

The spirit is the new law which gives life. The spirit gives believers the assurance that they are children of God and are justified in His sight and that they are righteous. Through the spirit they feel in their hearts the love with which they are loved by God.

You say, Art, what has this got to do with Psalm 102? Everything. By the spirit they know they are loved of God. They're not like that elder brother who would not enter the feast prepared for the prodigal's return.

He couldn't. He was scouring. He was looking down his nose.

He was peeved. He was pouting. You never did this for me.

How come you're doing it for him? He's wasted all his substance. He's a bum. And he's come back because he's had nothing better to eat than the pods that are fed to pigs.

And you're giving him a robe, a ring and a feast? You never did it for me. But my son, he said, your brother has come back his life from the dead. How could you not rejoice? Don't you know that everything that I have had has always been yours? You would have known it if you had been in the spirit.

But in the flesh and in your natural envious, bitter, jealous state, you couldn't know it. It's a knowledge that can only come by the spirit and in the spirit. Because it's a heavenly mentality that would release you to enter in to the rejoicing of the feast and not to stand outside pouting.

Condemning your brother who is returning, even the people Israel. Welcoming their return and not feeling as if you're going to be displaced. That they're going to be Johnny-come-latelys and they're going to have the glory of God and you're going to be shunted to the sidelines though you've been a faithful church all these years.

How can you not be resentful against that returning brother? Except you know that you know that you know that the Father has always given you all things. He has always been with you. We have always been present.

You needn't be jealous, fearful, intimidated or threatened. You can be expansive, magnanimous, gracious and rejoicing if you knew the love of God in your heart as experience because you're in the spirit. And know that you're loved by God and that you're righteous by the righteousness of God.

And therefore when they come and are hungry, thirsty, naked and in prison you can extend to them mercy. And when the Lord judges the sheep from the goats He'll say to you, Because you did this to the least of these, my brethren, you did it unto me. Now receive the kingdom prepared for you.

Righteous. Righteous is more than a legal definition. It's a state of being.

And the reality of that righteousness will manifest itself in feeding the hungry and putting something on their backs and giving them water and taking them in and extending mercy. No matter what the cost, even if we're caught in the act and have to suffer for it, we'll still do it. We must do it.

Our righteousness compels us to do it. We can't let them walk by still water and turn our back as if we had not seen them. Or let the man stand by the side of the road three hours in the rain as if we don't see him.

Or like the German brother told me in Berlin, an old man who lived through the Nazi time, he said, I looked down my apartment window to the street below and the Nazis had poured out of their trucks with their brown shirts and swastikas on and were breaking the Jewish door windows and pulling the beards of these elderly Jews and making them wash the sidewalk with a brush, humiliating. I said, what did you do? He said, what could I do, Art? I pulled down the shade and I turned away. I did what any natural man would do.

I took care of number one. I saw to my self-interest, my I, I, I, my me, me, me. I'm not going to identify with those Jews and suffer the consequence of it.

Only the righteous will. Only the righteous have no alternative. They're compelled.

The God that is in them goes out, must identify. And it doesn't matter if they come through with anything as if it's going to obtain something. It's not the issue that there'll be a result of your sacrifice.

It's the issue is that you cannot do otherwise. The righteousness of God in you compels you. You're in the spirit.

It's not whether it's going to work or not. It's like the kinds of things that we need to say, speak, register, write to the newspaper, letters to the editor, as I have done over that filthy film that came. What was it? With all those space, where you went into a store and there were the six foot cutouts of these bizarre grotesques looking down on you from every Pepsi Cola case.

Star Wars. Where the kids slept overnight in front of the theaters to be the first one in when the doors opened. Where the corporation employers shut down their enterprises because they knew people would take off from work to be there to see the film first.

So I wrote a letter to the editor and I appealed to the Christian reader. How was it that your children are not parked outside the door of the church to be the first one in on Sunday morning? How can you buy this merchandise and make sure that they have all of the latest figures and doodads and gimmicks and t-shirts and pillows and blankets and everything with the trademark and the design where the Pepsi Cola corporation would pay two and a half million dollars just to have the trademark rights on these ghastly figures to be employed with their products. And if you get all of the cans you'll have all the figures.

What, you're going to be silent while that's taking place? While American life is being traduced where we're being corrupted in merchandise where you can't go into a store without a cutout brooding over you? You're going to let your kids be the object of manipulation and be the object of merchandising and lose their souls and they see all of this phenomenal larger than life space sound and they're going to come on Sunday morning and listen to a Sunday school talk? You're going to sit there and let the world do a number on your generation in silence? Well, what was the effect of your letter? Nothing. No effect. Nothing changed.

But I could not remain silent. The spirit bathed me. It's not whether it's going to be efficacious or whether it'll be a necessary consequence.

You cannot afford to be silent and lose your integrity. To be in Christ is to be free indeed. Free from the law of sin and death.

Free from what is transcendent that is above the earth and self-concern. I, I, I, me, me, me. There's nothing more powerful.

Don't tell me because you're a Christian you're not yet self-centered. Don't tell me because we're Christians that we have changed the orbit. We have only just changed its attractions.

It's still, how did you like the service? What did you think of the speaker? Did you like, did you like, did you enjoy? Like you are the whole object and the sum all and the be all. How you thought, how you felt. I, I, I, me, me, me.

We have reinforced your egocentrism even in the church. It's powerful. It's an inordinately powerful, centrifugal thing.

I, I, I, me, me, me. And you're going to have compassion on her stones and pity on her dust? Who are you kidding? Only by the spirit. Only by the resurrection which is the spirit that raises you above earthly concerns and self-concern.

Raises you above envy, hatred, fear, self-preservation, me. It's being in Christ which is to be noble, magnanimous, self-giving, expansive, compassionate, merciful. Being in the spirit rests with the believer to decide whether he will be in earnest about it.

Oh, you guys are stuck. Watch out. Don't have these cute Jewish speakers coming through and give them a Sunday morning.

And enjoy it. You're going to be liable for this word as much as those Muslims last night were liable eternally for that word. God is not playing games when he wakes the servants up at 2, 3 and 4 in the morning and rivets their soul and gives them a word.

It's the now present word for his people. It's not an enjoyment. It's a requirement to be earnest about being in the spirit.

So earnest you'll pull the plug out and say, Lord, unless there's a spirit of worship, unless we have come to such a depth of the recognition of your grace in our lives that we cannot hold back the expression, however choked and spluttering and off-key, let us go with that rather than we should be captivated and taken up into an atmosphere that we're generating, aided and abetted by electronics, that is very engaging and enjoyable but does not strengthen us in the realm of spirit. You know what I thought this morning as I heard the worship? And you know I'm speaking in the right way. I remembered being in Darmstadt, Germany at the Evangelical Sisters of Mary.

Basilischlink, if any of you have ever heard that name. It's a piece of heaven. I walked in off the streets of Germany out of, what city did I... Darmstadt, where these women were born out of the fire bombings of World War II and interpreted the destruction of Germany as God's judgment upon their nation for the mistreatment of Jews.

And their whole burden, burden, ministry and community was born out of that repentance. And these women with their own hands built their worship places, built their houses, built their dormitories, built their stations of the cross. I walked in front, past that gate, I was in heaven.

And when I went to their worship time, their chapel time, like two or three times a day, the bell rings and you come into the chapel. And you come and you sit down and you look up, you see only Christ crucified. But you're hearing choruses of angels.

But where are they? They're not in front. You don't see them as seductive and attractive as what we see too often is. They are in the back, upstairs in the cloister, in the balcony.

And from there, unseen by men, comes this angelic music and chorus and worship. I have never seen that in any other place. Flesh or spirit? Being in the spirit.

Rest with the believer to decide whether he will be in earnest about it and consistently live in the spirit. He must resolve to let the spirit rule completely in all his thoughts, speech and action. He must not suppose that he can be in the spirit and at the same time live in the flesh.

For those who are in Christ and in the spirit, their being in the flesh is only a matter of outward appearance, not the real state of their existence. This relation, the elect man has to preserve by freeing himself from the thoughts and desires of his natural ego and submitting in all things to the ethical directions of the spirit. Oh, I'll tell you who Legion Strange was.

I'm going to conclude. I remember being invited for lunch. Was it Nashville, Tennessee? Some place like that.

Because a Jewish businessman was going to be a sport and have us for lunch because he wanted to engage me in debate over the table. He was such a hot shot know-it-all. So I came and I'm eating and he's carrying on and I'm not answering.

And he's carrying on and I'm not answering. And he's carrying on. He couldn't provoke me.

Finally he said, have you nothing to say? Aren't you going to defend your faith, you Jewish apostate? I said, you want to know something? This is the most expensive meal I've ever eaten. And that's all I said. That's all the spirit bade me say.

He's the Lord of our speaking and of our silences. He's the Lord over all. And the realm of spirit may often confound us and be different and other than what we would have thought as appropriate.

Jesus with Nicodemus left him bewildered. But Nicodemus was one of those who claimed the body of Jesus. And I'll see him in heaven eternally because he heard from heaven.

Though he was at first confounded, that confusion and bewilderment finally brought him to the knowledge of God. Don't give conventional answers. Don't be patsy.

To be led by the spirit is to be in Christ and must again become a reality. It's the resurrection mode of existence of which the spirit is token and pledge. We are the sons and daughters of the resurrection.

Not because we approve the correctness of the doctrine, but because we live in it and by it. We are already in the transcendent place. When we get our glorified body, it's the last flourish.

We're already in the heavenly realm. Got the idea? So Lord, my God, may we not fall short of the glory of God. May we not be satisfied to be mere men.

Merely religious. Merely correct. Merely attractive.

May our services be more than mere enjoyment. Our schooling more than mere education and receiving credential for ministry. The whole religious system, my God, conspires against your life to bring us down and to fix us at the earthly plane so that we are no heavenly good.

So I pray, Lord, for the church that it will take up its inheritance. It will appropriate its great privilege to live in the realm of spirit which is the mode of resurrection, newness of life, transcendent and heavenly. That when we shall be tested by Jews in their hour of distress which is soon and already being prepared, we will not react in irritation, in resentment, short-temperedness, mean-spiritedness, but we will show forth what God is.

For what God is, is what his spirit is. Magnanimous, patient, loving, kind. It will love their stones.

It will have compassion on their dust. It will not just acknowledge Israel's plight. It will be one with Israel in their plight.

Because our God says, in all your afflictions, I'm afflicted. And we will be your people and your church when in all their afflictions we will be afflicted also and counted a privilege and not a threat. Oh my God! We charismatics, we Pentecostals, are the worst offenders against the spirit of God.

We have trafficked in your spirit. We have made hay. We have feathered our nest.

We have furthered our careers. We have employed you as if you're an adornment not knowing that it's your vital life. Raise us from our dead, Lord.

Let this be the word that raises the dead. Let the spirit of this word go into the dry bones that have been thinly disguised and have not seen their condition because of the enjoyment of the music and the choruses that set their feet a-tapping. The spirit of life, Lord, raise them up as an apostolic and prophetic reality for still water, for the native Indian, for the foreign students that are at their door and for the Jews who will soon be there.

Seal this word, Lord. Remind us and call us back again to the primacy of the spirit of God which is at war with flesh and flesh with it. Jealous, my God, for that which comes down from above moment by moment.

Wake us up at 3 a.m. Do what you will. Our life is not our own. We're raised from the dead to a newness of life, a pox on everything that is predictable, that has become cliched, formularized.

Our amens and hallelujahs. More chokes, more splutters, more gasps. More not knowing how.

More dependency upon the reality of your life, we pray. In Jesus' name, God's people said, Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/10/SID10882.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/from-self-to-spirit/>

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