

# Gleanings From Psalms 18 in the Light of Current Revival Phenomena

by Art Katz

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a sense of God's holiness and separation from the profane in order to know God and do great exploits out of that knowledge.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 18:7

**Topics:** "Holiness Of God", "Pursuit of God"

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## Description

Art Katz emphasizes the critical need for the church to regain a true sense of God, as depicted in Psalms 18, warning against the dangers of complacency and the trivialization of God's holiness. He argues that the pursuit of knowledge about God should be a lifelong quest, and that the current revival phenomena may distract from this essential pursuit. Katz calls for a separation of the sacred from the profane, urging believers to maintain a holy reverence for God that can genuinely impact others, particularly the Jewish community. He stresses that true faith is rooted in the fear and awe of God, which is often absent in contemporary church life. Ultimately, Katz challenges the church to seek God earnestly and to reflect His holiness in their witness to the world.

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## Transcript

I am going to take look at portions of Psalms 18 because this psalm evokes a sense of God that I think we desperately need. The sense of God is the only all-important reality. And what is the church without a sense of God or the holiness of God? And if we lose that, what do we have? And what are we? And what is our witness? And how shall we ever move Jews to jealousy? So there is nothing more to be coveted, more to be cherished, more to be preserved, more to be watched over than the sense of God as He in fact is and not as we may have thought Him to be.

The pursuit of the knowledge of God should be our lifelong quest. And everything in the world, even in the religious world, conspires against that knowledge--even our own enthusiasms, and even our own desire for successful meetings, which might ironically oppose and be the greatest detriment to the knowledge of God. If you cannot yet understand me, you have very little sense of the irony or paradox that is implicit in the faith. There is an exhortation in the Word to be the people of God--those who have risen above carnal excitement in our meeting places, and to come to the place in the Spirit, and to maintain that place, that might require ironically, not more sound and more noise, but more silence.

So in Psalms 18 verse 7, we read: Then the earth shook and quaked and the foundations of the mountains were trembling and were shaken because He was angry. Smoke went up out of His nostrils and a fire from His mouth devoured. Coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also and came down with thick darkness under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub and flew, and He sped upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around him, darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.

From the brightness before him passed His thick clouds, hailstones, and coals of fire. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the most high uttered His voice. Hailstones and coals of fire, and He sent out His arrows and scattered them, and lightning flashes in abundance and routed them. Then the channels of water appeared and the foundations of the world were laid bare at Thy rebuke oh Lord, at the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils. I suppose a skeptic can dismiss God as being described with nostrils and smoke and all of that.

But I love what is being conjured up in this description, and I think that we desperately need this view of God, because He is in danger of being made a commonplace. More often than we know, we are fashioning Him in our own image, and we are not even aware that we are consciously doing it. We need to be reminded of the mightiness of God. He is other than what we ourselves are. Maybe I am only speaking ancestrally as a Jew, and something in my gut remembers God's lament with us that we "thought [He] was such a one as [us]" and that the knowledge of Him was being taught by the mere precepts of men.

These are not God's compliments toward us, but rather His indictments. How then should the knowledge of God be obtained? Once anyone resorts to teaching God as a precept, it is no longer God. It is only about God. It is principles about what we think God is and how He acts, but it is not God Himself, as He is. My own observation is that the fear of God is conspicuously absent from most expressions of church life. In its place, there seems to be a rather slack atmosphere, a complacency about God, or a kind of matter-of-factness.

We have to contend for the faith once-and-for-all given the saints. I love the doctrines of the church, but that is not our problem. Faith is the apprehension of God as He is, that fear and awe of Him; it is the sense of God that tempers everything. And if it is not to be found in the church, what shall we hope for in any nation? And little wonder, then, that the supernatural phenomena that are currently plaguing the churches are finding such ready acceptance. We have nurtured a ready-made audience looking for novelty, needing a lift, needing an experience, needing a blessing.

At least we have recognized that our church and Christian lives are hardly more than a succession of predictable Sundays. We do need something. But unhappily, what we are grasping for is not what we really need, and in fact, will probably move us further from the obtainment of what we really need. So I am concerned for the church, just for its own sake, let alone that I know that there is no other agency given in the earth by which Jews are to be made jealous. And if we fail in that witness, we fail in all.

And although Paul does not articulate and define what it is that we are to do to make Jews jealous, it is evidently something we have not yet done. And probably it has not to do with our doing, but more with our being. Jews should come into our assemblies and stop and gasp and throw their hands over their mouths because of the sense of a holy God that is present with us. I don't think there is any more awesome demonstration to an unbelieving Jew than the "light that lightens the gentiles which is also the glory of the people Israel."

In verse 25, we read, "With the kind, Thou dost show Thyself kind. With the blameless, Thou dost show Thyself blameless. With the pure, Thou dost show Thyself pure. And with the crooked [margin: twisted], Thou dost show Thyself astute." Somehow the apprehension of God is very much affected by our perception of Him. And therein lies the problem. We are bringing a distortion out of our own subjectivity, out of our own twist. We see God out of a prism of our own being. Some people are seeing God as quite cheap, as if He is some kind of a lackey or errand boy.

But it does require something from us to perceive God rightly. "With the pure Thou dost show Thyself pure." If you have any kind of controversy with God this morning, the problem is not He, but yourself. You are projecting something on Him. You are becoming guilty of Israel's sin. "You thought that I was such a one as you are." We need to be transformed into His image, and not to project our image on Him. He is not a convenience. He is God. He is the Creator. He is Almighty.

I do not have adequate words or adjectives. Unless you know Him in the place that is too deep for words, do you really know Him? Until there is a gasp and a splutter, until you find yourself prostrate and stretched out as dead, do you really know Him? And how many of us will go through an entire Christian lifetime without that knowledge, and be perfectly content, and think that we are doing God service, and that we know Him, and that we can communicate Him? Verse 27 says, "For Thou dost save an afflicted people, but haughty eyes Thou dost abase."

Wow! Just a haughty look God despises--haughtiness, human self-exaltation, and religious pomp. And when I see the video tapes of the characters who purportedly bring these revival phenomena, that is what I see--the swagger and the performance. It is a carnival, dear saints, and God does not lend Himself to carnivals! And I do not care what measure of supposed blessing is being obtained. God is being denigrated; there is irretrievable loss for His name and reputation. We are in the last days.

These are solemn and awesome days, and God is waiting for the fulfillment of mandates and callings that are so monumental--requiring a people of apostolic and prophetic stature to perform, not clowns! God hates haughty eyes; He hates that pomp of men whereby they can move their little fingers and numbers fall in the process. "Well, if that is not God, by what power are they falling down and being healed?" I am glad you asked that. You should have asked it long before, and you need to continue asking it.

I would direct your attention to Jeremiah, chapter 15:19. "Therefore," thus says the Lord, "if you return, then I will restore you. Before Me you will stand. And if you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become My spokesman." And I think other versions read, "If you remove the sacred from the profane or the vile, then you will become My spokesman." There needs to be a separation. We need to disengage ourselves from the things that are profane. The whole world is profane.

There is a process of profanation taking place everywhere. There is something that is cheapening and degrading in television, in language, in street conversation--especially in the USA. The church needs to be jealous for the sanctity of words and language--and I am not even talking about biblical language, but about language in and of itself. We have the exquisite privilege of being made in God's image whereby we have the faculty to speak. And to cheapen that, to make our small talk really small, to trivialize our life, to not hold dear the things that sanctify us and make us human in God's image is to enter the process by which everything is being made profane.

The church is called to be a nation of priests. And the priest has the obligation to teach peoples and nations the difference between the things that are holy and the things that are profane. And how shall we

teach what we ourselves do not know, and what we ourselves have not extended ourselves to find out and to preserve and to keep alive in our own consciousness? Can we really pursue this and move in this way except we take the Television out of the house? It is not enough just to shut it off.

I used to keep a television for the news. But the news is becoming as vulgar and obscene as anything else--especially when it is interwoven with sordid commercials. It is not worth it to find out what is going on in the world if that is the price we have to pay in having our own spirits being made sodden and dulled. And then we try to come into the scriptures, and we find that we are not profiting. We will find ourselves unable to have a time of devotion that is a delight. Praying is drudgery at best, and often nothing more than mechanical requirement.

Our spirits are being made dull. We are being profaned because we have not separated the sacred from the profane. We have not kept it at a distance. We have a God who says, "Don't mix linen and wool. Don't harness an ox and an ass together." Why? Don't they pull? Doesn't it work? Isn't it expedient? Isn't it efficacious? Yes, it is going to work. Linen and wool will probably make a lovely garment. But it is a mixture, an adulteration, and God said, "Thou shalt not mix. Thou shalt be separate and holy unto Me."

There is a lot of mixing going on, and we have not been careful to separate the precious from the vile. "Then you will become My spokesman." Oh praise God. When is the last time you have heard one? We hear a lot of preaching, a lot of words. But a spokesman is one who bears the message and the burden of the Lord. I think there is a famine already in the land for the Word of God. In the midst of the welter of cassettes and books and ministries, where are the spokesmen of the Lord?

Spokesmen of the Lord separate the cheap, the trivial, the trite, the commonplace, from the things that are holy and the things that are sacred, lest the holy thing become swamped and becomes trivialized itself. What hope is there for mankind if God should become trivialized? What hope for anything? What standard for anything? To what shall the world go to if there is no standard in the church? Ezekiel 22 speaks of Israel's pathetic condition, and I think we ourselves are moving toward it as the church.

Wouldn't it be a remarkable thing that at the end of the age, God has a remorseful Israel and a remorseful church. Both have fallen short of the glory of God, and both require the mercy of God that He might comprehend both in His mercy. He says in chapter 22:26, Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the profane. They have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they hide their eyes from my Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

And further in Ezekial 44, verse 23, Moreover, they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. Well, we are the royal priesthood and the priesthood of all believers. There's no room for any of us to be slack. We all need to be vigilant in our priestly obligation, not only to be separating in ourselves the profane from the holy, but to communicate and to teach that to men. I feel an obligation, then, as a priestly and prophetic man, to say something about the revival phenomena that have been visited upon us in recent times.

I am not in a position to categorically condemn as deception the ostensible benefits to which many testify. God is always free to bless whom He will bless. I think that that may well be happening, that naive souls, in simple faith, come into those places with expectancy, and are met by God--despite the questionable things that are taking place. But I would not say that that blessing confirms or validates the entire thing that is going on. That is exactly what makes deception a deception, because it is mixed, because it contains

elements that are dubious and suspicious, and at the same time, there seems to be apparent blessing.

Who has the acumen and the discernment to see through the outward things? Whose discernment has been increased by the exercise thereof? And who can discern that which is good from that which is evil, that which is profane from that which is holy? The mere invocation of the name of the Lord has become a cheap cliché in our generation. Everyone can vocalize that. But does that sanctify it? Does that make it official? Does that make it God's name? When we employ the name of God to somehow validate the human and religious thing that we are promoting, we are already mixing the profane into the holy.

As a young believer, my most painful entry into the church was to see the glib frequency with which gentile Christians took the name of the Lord to their lips. Orthodox Jews, who are still in darkness and who have never had the revelation of the Messiah, will not even spell the word, God. It's G-D. In other words, you don't take that word so frequent to your lips, or you find yourself cheapening it. So I am not knocking blessings that some may authentically be receiving. But my point is that if we can succeed in bringing the church to viewing benefit as the determinant by which something is judged to be of God, we may well have been brought to the very ground of deception itself.

Is that all it takes to persuade you whether something is from God or not? That you receive a benefit, or a blessing, or a release from some personality disorder? Is that all it takes? And Satan is well able to provide that same release. There is something more important than benefits and release from hang-ups. It is the holiness of God; it is His name; it is His honor. It is who He is in Himself. And benefit of a dubious kind is too high a price to pay if it is going to throw any shadow upon His great name.

In fact, any desire for benefit that might accrue to you is suspect and no longer a priestly posture. I have often been astonished when the appeals for healing come. Almost everyone comes out of their seat. I have never seen such a sick church everywhere. And I think that we will continue to be sick so long as we live essentially egocentric lives. This self-centeredness pervades all too much of what we are about. And what will be the first statement and question that you raise when you leave this room this morning?

What did you think of the speaker? Did you like his message? Can you see how we are still the center of our being? There is a way in which we can shift from carnal centrality to spiritual centrality, but we are still the center. No wonder we are sick. No wonder we need continually to be healed. We have a false center, and it is in ourselves, in our church, in our denominations. So for myself, I would choose to keep my distance from such phenomena, trusting that whatever I might be missing is not greater than what I am protecting and cherishing, and that the Lord is not offended by a carefulness that would rather err in a jealousy for His holiness than to risk subverting what has already been given as pure and true.

There is no neutral ground when you give yourself to the dubious things. You are going to suffer loss. If you allow yourself, and submit yourself, to come into an environment of a certain kind, and even to receive the 'blessings' and the 'laying on of hands'--I believe that something will be transmitted to you by that one who is extending his hands. It is amazing what people will open themselves for. And some of these characters have said, "We know that this is a mixed bag, but we are so desperate for something to happen, that even if Satan is getting in on the act, and even if flesh is exhibiting itself, at least something is happening.

Well, they have never read Psalms 18 or any of the texts I am quoting today. Do we have a residue of God in truth in our inner man? Do we have a precious accumulation of something that has been worked in our inner being in communion with God over the course of our spiritual history? Do we know God in the kind of

knowledge that has to do with His sufferings--the kind of knowledge that comes through trials, through breakings, and through dealings? How many are quick to shut ourselves off from those very things because they are too painful to consider?

I cherish all the residue of the knowledge of God that has come in those ways, via the work of the Cross. And you know how I test whether something is of God or not? I still my soul. Carnal ministers want you to be engaged in your soul. That is why there is much noise, the unnecessary use of amplifiers, the music, the motion, the activity, everybody moving and getting into the act. Sorry, but the more God-honoring posture is to be still before the Lord. And it is not pleasant to be so seemingly "out of it" when everything is tugging at you to be 'one of the boys' and to go along with the carnival show.

In fact, can we even distinguish between our soul and our spirit? Or is it one big blur? So I wait to see if my spirit is hospitable to what is being mediated so that I know whether it is compatible with my already existing knowledge of God. And if it is not compatible, they can stand on their heads, they can run all over the platform, they can bark like dogs, they can climb the flagpoles--which they do--and every other kind of madness, and I am completely imperturbable and unmoved.

I will not give myself to it at all. I need to guard my sanctity. I need to guard my integrity in God. Or else this message would be something less and other than what it is. I cannot allow myself to be sucked in and influenced and taken up and affected by the current trends. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are all the issues of life." You say, brother, the way you talk and carry on, is there time enough for that kind of Christian living? You make it sound like a fulltime occupation.

I only have time on Sunday for an hour or two, and I might even come to a midweek service. But the way you are talking, to maintain your spirit and guard yourself and grow in the nurture and the faith and all these obligations, you make it sound like that is the whole purpose of our being. Exactly. Exactly. The Christian life and walk is not a Sunday supplement. God has great purposes to consummate through a church that knows Him, and will do great exploits out of that knowledge--and only that knowledge.

Paul says, "O, that I might know Him in the fellowship of His sufferings." There is a knowledge of God in that place that is so exquisite, nor is it to be obtained in any other place. Or have you been inducted into the mindset of the world--the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, protecting your life, your privacy, guarding yourself lest there be any threat, any injury, any pain? No wonder the church is hardly more than a conglomerate of individualities living their privatistic lifestyles.

Where is the church of the apostolic kind where "those who believed were together"? "And great grace was upon them all, and with power gave the apostles testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Privatistic life styles are contrary to the ethos, the character, and the genius of true church. True church is a suffering before it is a glory, just by what we are ourselves together in the intensity of that life. And until we will go that way, we will not move anybody to jealousy, certainly not Jews.

"Well, Art, don't be so critical. Don't think that these revival phenomena are carnivals and these guys are clowns." Sorry, but they look and act like it. I have watched these men go into stupors, who are purportedly ministers of the Word of God, and who stand there and sag and splutter and repeat themselves insanely before collapsing in a heap to the ground. Tell me how that is God honoring. And then they make statements like, "I've seen more blessing now under this blessing than ever was obtained through the preaching of the Word."

Well, I have a greater jealousy for the Word of God. And when I see a phenomenon touted as revival by which the Word of God is conspicuously absent and denigrated as not being the source of God's greatest blessing, but that experience has replaced it, my alarm goes up instantly--and so ought also yours. "Well, Art, they are doing a lot more preaching now." Sure they are--because they are sensitive to the criticism that has come. But what kind of preaching is it? Is it not just the most commonplace homily that anyone can put together out of a few scriptures.

Do you call that a message? Does that make it true preaching? Even the prophets, so called, that seem to be attracted and identified with these carnivals tell us no more than a few personal things about ourselves. Is that all we want? But where is the prophetic word? Where are the oracles of God, the very distinctive of God? Where is the weighty thing that we need to hear for the church in the last days in all of the precarious things that are going on? That is the prophetic word, but where is it?

All I observe is that the Word has been rudely shelved and we seem to be content with a merely correct biblical word. Well, if this is not the lying signs and wonders that we have been warned would characterize the last days, when those lying signs and wonders do come, how will they be substantially different in form and appearance from what is now presently taking place? And how will we then exercise discernment that we are now incapable of exercising? The church needs to be stirred up saints.

We need to be called to a maturity. These are the last days, and if this is not that of which you have been warned, when that comes which are the lying signs and wonders, will we recognize it? There will be miracles and signs and wonders. There will be demonstrations of the supernatural. There will be benefit. But they will be lying signs and wonders. And if we are only concerned with the benefit, and not all that much with the source, will we discern it? I know that there is a gift of discernment, but I also know that there is an exercise of discernment that is corporate, that somehow is the reflection of the stature and quality and the maturity of the corporate people of God together.

Are you able to discern not only the things that are evil, but the things that are good? It is the things that are good that are most likely to trap us. It is good to go here, and it is good to do this, and it is good to take care of that need. But it is good that will be our undoing, because evil will be so blatant and evident. The good thing will be the most difficult to discern unless our discernment has been strengthened by the exercise thereof. Unless we have a priestly jealousy for that which is perfect, good is going to do be our downfall.

Has God changed, who is the same yesterday and forever, who said that His priests must mount a ramp and not go up by steps? That is in Exodus chapter 20, verse 26. He did not allow His priests to step up to the place of ministry by steps, but only by a ramp. You say, "that is a peculiar requirement. How come?" Because in lifting your leg to go from one step to another, there might be a slight possibility of revealing your flesh. And the ramp was the more secure provision that no flesh be revealed in God's presence.

If that's not the God who is God now, then shoot me and get me out of my misery. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. "On man's flesh," God says of the holy anointing oil, "it shall not be poured. Neither shall you make any other like it." Be careful not to counterfeit this. Do not turn up your amplifiers; do not psyche up the people through music; do not create an atmosphere or an environment that assumes ushers in the Holy Spirit. Wait for the holy anointing oil, for God will anoint what He appoints and not what we establish for our own satisfaction or enjoyment or the assurance of a good service.

Be jealous for the holy thing, the holy anointing oil. It makes all the difference. It is life giving. Let us not make any other like it. I am told that in the Welsh revival, they would not even allow musical instruments. Have you read Watchman Nee's book, *The Latent Power of the Soul*? Find a copy and study it. He talks about the laughing phenomenon in the 1920s, and he warns about the use of musical instruments and its soulish power to bring deception. And that was before the advent of amplifiers and our musical technology.

I wonder if we have crossed the point of no return already. And maybe God wants us to pray for the state of the church in all of its lamentable condition--that is so open and susceptible for the kinds of things that are now taking place. Talk about dancing about a golden calf. A whole generation is being raised up that has never known the holiness of God. I am even wondering if these central personalities have covenanted with someone other than God and don't even know it themselves, and in some Faustian way are receiving a power to affect bodies and lives that they thought is coming from God.

Their own knowledge of God is so sparse and so utterly questionable that it may well be that they have already been covenanting with some other thing that parades as light and that responded to their cry for something to happen, and they think that they are communicating with God or an angel--but which God and which angel? It was not too long ago that the thought came to me, you don't have to be a Mormon or a Jehovah's Witness or subscribe to some sect or some cult to be deceived.

You can subscribe to correct Christian orthodoxy and be as effectually deceived in the correctness of that credal statement as if you were embracing false doctrine. And in fact, that kind of deception is the most devious and most powerful of all because you think yourself correct. There is a need to know God, saints, a desperate need to know God. And He's waiting to be sought. And He distinguishes that people, that generation that will ascend the holy hill of Zion, in Psalms 24, as those with clean hands and a pure heart who have not given their soul to vanity by running to Toronto, Brownsville, [or Lakeland]\*.

The pure of heart are those who will ascend the holy hill and throw the bolt that opens the gate that the King of Glory might come in. And the psalmist says, "This is the generation of them that seek Thee, that seek Thy face, O God of Jacob." You don't have to go to any distant city to seek Him. Be ruthless against yourself in finding time, in sending the kids out, in getting those clamoring legitimate things away that are clawing at you always. Lock yourself in a room, throw the key away, do something; but seek God and be found of Him.

That is His promise, "If you will seek for Me with all your heart and all your soul, you shall be found of Me." And when you obtain that knowledge, maintain it, or you will lose it. Pray for the church. In this critical hour, deception is rampant. My Jewish people are perishing. Where is that witness that moves them to jealousy? Jews are everywhere about us totally unimpressed with our best charismatic demonstrations. We need to come into a place that is holy, holy, holy, where God is known as He is and not as men think Him to be.

Out of that place, we can then make Him known. Prayer: So Lord Jesus, precious God, Holy One, our hearts go out to you Lord. We apologize for the way in which You have been slurred, for the blasphemy that takes place everywhere, not by the worldlings, but by your supposed ministers. The use of You, the exploitation, the employment of Your name to sanctify cheap carnival things. Lord forgive us that we have been saps, that we have gone along with it, that we have paid for it, that we have underwritten it and have not been jealous for Your name and Your honor, and for Your person.

We have to say that we ourselves don't know You as we ought. We have not been diligent to know you and to seek you and to retain that knowledge and to be jealous over it and to be willing, like Paul, to know you in the fellowship of Your sufferings. We have preferred guarded, private lives. And though we have sung the brave choruses, the real testimony of our heart is, "this far and no further." We don't want to go all the way. That's fanatical and upsetting and threatening.

We want a measured Christian life, singing the choruses, but having no intention of doing Your will. And Lord, we ask your forgiveness. We have given ourselves to an appearance of something that is not, and we enjoy that appearance, and we even have persuaded ourselves that it's true of us. Lord help us. Help us in Your mercy and Your great love for the church that was birthed out of Your bleeding side. Wash us with the water of Your Word. Grant us, my God, the gift of repentance.

And if we don't need it for ourselves, may we repent for the church in our identification with it. Come, Lord, stir our hearts and don't let us get away. Hold us accountable for what we are reading today. And may we be of that generation that seeks You, that seeks Your face, O God of Jacob, is our prayer, in Yeshua's holy name. Amen. Transcribed and edited from a spoken message \*Editor's liberty - not in original text. Take it as you seem fit.

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