

# Holl-03 Anatomy of Conversion

by Art Katz

---

*Art Katz's sermon explores the profound nature of conversion, emphasizing the necessity of divine revelation, prayer, and the transformative power of suffering in the life of a disciple.*

**Duration:** 45:20

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:11, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 John 3:1

**Topics:** "Conversion"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the challenges of preaching the word of God in a hostile and prejudiced world. He shares a personal story of a pastor who was feeling discouraged and ready to give up, but through prayer, received a new vision from God to become an evangelist in Muslim nations. The speaker emphasizes the need for a spiritual transformation and surrender to God's will in order to effectively reach others with the gospel. He also mentions a gospel outreach event at City College in New York City, where he relied on God's resurrection power to minister to a predominantly Jewish audience.

---

## Transcript

All of this cheap talk about being born again, being born again. The phrase is in the mouth of the world. You can't even pick up the sports section without seeing it.

Born again or Craig Morton. Or some football player. Born again or, born again or.

It's like a title. But it's not by the will of men. Nor of flesh or of blood.

But of God. Knowing these things. Being ourselves, birthed in this way.

And therefore profoundly respectful for the working of God by the Spirit. How much more motive do we have to find our time on our knees, waiting. Than to be found so quick in doing.

Praying for the light of God to fall. Beseeking heaven. In corporate fastings.

In prayers that the Holy Spirit himself gives. In groanings that cannot be uttered. That's painful.

It's easier to do. We need to see. Let the heaven be opened.

That we might see. And be converted. Have our methods converted.

Our evangelistic mentalities converted. By falling to the earth. And hearing a voice saying.

This is the way. There's a pattern here. You know what Paul cried out to the voice of him who said, Soul, soul, why for persecutors thou me? He said, who art thou, Lord? How many of us need to ask that question? Before we go any further.

Who art thou, Lord? We really don't know you as we ought. We have trafficked in you. We have merchandised in you.

We have done many things in your name. But who art thou, Lord? And the answer was, I am Jesus. Whom thou persecutest.

Whom thou hast abused. Whom thou hast misused. Whom thou hast exploited.

Whom thou hast turned to your own ends. Whom you have appropriated for your own satisfaction. Whom you have taken to serve your own purposes.

Whose name you have used to justify your own ways. Really, Lord, who art thou? And the answer is, I am. I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

Can I use the board? That's the revelation that Paul received on the cross. That's the revelation that God received on the road to Damascus. Light from heaven was needed for that.

Have you seen this? I am, versus thou. Who art thou, Lord, he said with trembling and astonishment. I am that I am that I am.

Whom thou persecutest. Whom you abused. Turned to your own ends.

Made evangelical systems out of. Discipleship systems. And hokey church systems.

Superficial Christian culture. That's who you are, thou. This is who I am.

I am. He asked that question with trembling. And deep astonishment.

Because he had been brought down to the earth. In a blinding light by a glory of light. Then he heard the voice.

And had this exchange. It all began with a suddenly. A great light from heaven.

That made him fall to the ground. That's conversion. Have you asked the question? Really, Lord, who art thou? If I don't know you unto fear.

If I don't know you unto deepest reverence. If I don't know you unto holy, holy, holy. That I would rush off and do my thing in your name.

That when I should stand in some excruciating place of commitment. That I have to choose between whether I'm going to act to please me or to please you. I'm going to do something convenient to save myself embarrassment.

Or cleave to you unto death. Preferring to suffer the humiliation of not speaking. That I should initiate something out of myself for myself.

This kind of ultimate obedience. Can only come from one who has been deeply converted. And where they ask the question with astonishment and trembling.

And receive the answer by the light from heaven. I am. I am that I am.

Children, we don't know God as we ought. Do you know what his great lament was against Israel? This great religious nation. Very practiced in its Judaism.

You thought I was such a one as yourself. How many of us are busy making him into our image. Rather than allowing him to take us out of the dust of death and shape us into his.

As Jesus was to bring many souls into his image. It says Jesus wants to bring many souls into glory. Will bring many souls into glory.

After that you can ask the question. But never before. Lord, you have never spoken it like this before.

Before the word was easy to speak. That word was always so easy at first. You are always Lord, Lord, Lord.

It sounded like you were talking to your buddies. But something new has come into your voice. Another kind of resonance.

A much deeper appreciation of who it is you are speaking to. That this Jesus is not your buddy. He is I am that I am that I am.

Then you can say Lord. With deep trembling. What would you have for me to do? And if you would have me to be silent before thousands.

With my face sticking out. In utter humiliation unto death. That's it.

That's end time servants must come out of such a conversion. Dear children, I can illustrate every point I am making out of my experience. I am not talking abstractly or academically.

My only frustration is we have not the time to give illustration point by point. I am trying to think should I say this one or that one. I have got to give them at least one.

Should it be that gospel outreach at the City College in New York City, 85% Jewish? That was prepared by months of prayer and fasting. To which I came in a condition of fast. Having been up half the night before at the University of Boston.

Where you gloriously ministered to Gentiles. Utterly confident that your resurrection life would bring a greater glory before these New York City Jewish students. And to come into that room more dead than alive.

Weak and beggarly in every natural way. But utterly confident in your life. The God who had zapped them at Harvard and many other places.

And to walk into that room where you can cut the atmosphere with a knife. That bristled with hatred. You never saw such angry faces in your life.

They were beside themselves with indignation and frustration. That anyone should have the gall to bring a gospel message to a New York City University, 85% Jewish. And you're going to bring it as a Jew yourself, a traitor.

Who has become quote-unquote a missionary. Who is worse than Hitler. Because Hitler only destroyed our bodies.

And you're seeking to destroy our souls. And you're getting paid for it by the churches. Why else would you be doing a thing like that except for such a motive? And you cannot explain a word.

You simply have to come in obedience. This wasn't some human arrangement. The Spirit of God called us to this three months before.

And a light came down from heaven in a student Christian group at the school. And we fell on our faces and weeping before God. Now the day has come, three months later.

Fasting and prayer beyond anything you can imagine. What an expectation of glory from heaven. Trying not to look with the natural eye at the hatred that is everywhere before you.

Trying to remember the reality of the resurrection. When you're not in the most conducive atmosphere. Can you be spiritual then? How about your amens and hallelujahs then? And all of that sea of hostility and bitterness.

Two thousand years of vented prejudice about the persecution of Jews at the hands of Christians. Coming to one focal point in you. Got a message for that moment? What should I try? The four spiritual laws? Or five? What would be appropriate? What would be clever enough? To pierce through two thousand years of bitter prejudice and satanic misunderstanding.

And turn an entire Jewish audience around. And bring them to the knowledge of him whose name they can't even peaceably pronounce. Got a clever message for that? You can operate on principles.

Past practice, experience, expertise. Only one thing can suffice. That which cometh down from above.

By the Spirit of God. No matter what it is. Though it disappoints you.

And something you would not have chosen. And that's what I spoke that day. The strangest thing happened.

It was not anointed. How do you explain that? You say that the Lord gave you that message. But it was not anointed.

How do you explain that? I don't. I can't. And I'm not required to.

I don't need an explanation. Before the sovereign God who is I am that I am that I am. What happened? It was a pitiful failure.

The word fell out of my mouth and directly to the floor with a loud clunk. And it's as if it infuriated the audience even more. Now they were absolutely persuaded that I was an ignoramus and a jackass who didn't know which end was up.

Coming with a Gentile Bible, King James. A Jew who doesn't even speak Hebrew. To contend with these sophisticated intellectuals, these multilingual geniuses.

Brings a medieval old wives tale that has caused them unspeakable suffering and death through the centuries. So I finished my pitiful few remarks. And as my practice was, I opened for questions and answers.

Were very quick. The first one on his feet was the rabbi from the Hillel organization. Right out of central casting with his Van Dyck beard and yarmulke.

Who looked completely classical. A very impressive man with a lot of papers. What a contrast with those pitiful speeches that he couldn't get out of his words.

A man and a dirty gentleman. I could literally feel it. I tell you, I would have preferred to have been whipped than to feel the whip of those words while I was standing in front of that Jewish community.

And also of the Christian universities. Those Christian people who came there with such expectations. He stormed out of the room and slammed the door and shook the room with the power of his personality.

And then immediately another Jew got to his feet. And he finished another. And another.

And another. You would think that time had stood still. Talk about eternity.

Will this suffering ever end? Will this mortification and humiliation ever end? Why couldn't you give them the answer? Why didn't you quote Isaiah 3 and Proverbs 30? Don't you know the messianic scripture? Weren't you clever? Why didn't you quote all those clever scriptures? I was as one dead. There was no cleverness in me. His life was not giving me the enablement to speak.

Wasn't the Lord whispering to you, it's okay Art, I'm going to take care of this and you'll see glory. Silence from heaven. No explanation for me.

And there was no explanation for Lazarus either. Art, what was the worst thing of that day? Was it the overwhelming attack of your Jewish kinsmen? No, that wasn't the worst thing. It was the Christian faces.

They didn't say a word to me. But their faces spoke volumes. Hey cats, don't you know how to pray? Haven't you ever heard of fasting? Got secret sin in your life? Where's the allanting that you're supposed to have? We thought it had been you who would have restored the glory of Israel.

Faces full of accusation. An unspeakable disappointment. Painful disillusionment.

People who looked to me as a leader. As a man of courage and God. Looked at a terrible failure.

And I could not answer them a word. Because he didn't give me any. I went home like a dead man.

For three weeks I licked my wounds like a dog. And there was Satan having a wonderful time. You should never have left the teaching profession.

Who ever said that God called you to ministry? You have a calling to your own people? What made you think you were a minister? You really missed it, buddy. God didn't call you to that. You don't even know how to discern his mind and will.

You really missed it. And look at the consequence of it. You can't call that time back again.

What an opportunity to make an impact on the Jewish mainstream. And you couldn't even come up with a decent message. Talk about hearing a voice that was not from heaven.

But Art, where was heaven's voice? Silent. You can't compel it. You can't bring it down for your convenience.

To alleviate for you your moment of humiliation? His suddenly comes at his time and not yours. And if you're not prepared to live like that for this I am that I am, don't call yourself a disciple. So three weeks later I got a phone call.

I could hardly hear the voice. Some woman with a thin voice. Mr. Katz.

Some Jewish woman who had read my book wanted to ask me questions about the faith. I said, lady, go find somebody else for me. I don't know enough to put on the back of a postage stamp.

But if you can't find anybody else you can come. So she came. Beautiful wretch that she was.

She had one foot in the grave. On a nervous wreck. Big dark circles under her eyes.

Bony wrists and veins sticking out. Impulsive chain smoker. Filling my room with smoke and the ashtrays with butts.

Asking me questions, questions, questions. Until she came to the last question. What must I do to be saved? I love to hear that question.

Aren't we giving answers before we get the question? Answers for questions that men have not yet asked. Aren't we not to be provoking the question? That makes the question a cry. That makes the salvation a conversion.

And not just a mere acceptance. I told her what she needed to do. And the silly thing took my hand and she wanted to follow me in a prayer.

So I led her in a sinner's prayer to call on the name of the Lord. She passed from death to life before my eyes. I watched the light of God literally come into her face.

Saved out of eternal death. Born again from above. In God's own time, by God's own means.

Pulling a pathetic wretch like me. And then walking her to the door that night and putting her coat on her shoulders. I said, by the way, how is it you came to me? Why didn't I tell you? My son was at City College three weeks ago when you spoke to him.

He came home with your book. He said, Mom, you've got to read this. The most exceptional thing happened today.

A Jewish man came to the university and stood very simply and presented his convictions. And he was enormously attacked and overwhelmed. But he didn't answer his accusers a single word.

And I've never seen anything like that. You've got to read this book, Mom. You think all that dying is worth it for one skinny, wretched Jewish soul? Well, we saved 70,000 this year.

Well, at least they made decisions. This is a cheap age. Grim and easy.

But a soul that is born again unto eternal life, nothing is more precious than a Jewish soul. Not by the will of man or a flesh of blood, but by the will of God. How much do we, who are concerned for the world, esteem this? And are willing for the suffering that it requires? Have you ever heard of a birth that was cheap? That was not painful? That wasn't preceded by uncomfortable swollenness? And morning sickness and nausea? And being blown out of all shape and proportion? And the one Christian woman who had a husband take all the mirrors out of the house? So much did the process of birth offend her? But that's what it takes to birth something in the earth that is holy, sinless and pure.

Whether we're talking about a soul or a community. Whether bringing forth of a true disciple in the earth. Who knows I am that I am that I am.

And that he is merely a thou. Who can then say, Lord, what would you have for me to do? And live forever after in the spirit of that question. Can I give you a more recent illustration? Not before Jews in New York.

Before Egyptians in Cairo. Leave it to God to bring you from one to the other. And I'll tell you that the situation in Cairo seemed more hopeless than the one I've just described.

It was a Pentecostal church. It took us two hours to get there through that city. If you've not seen Cairo, there's no way to describe it.

It's an anguish of soul just to get from one place to another. To fight your way through the debris and the clutter and the camel dung and the filth and the disease. So we got there a little band of American believers.

I could only believe it was a church. Let alone Pentecostal. I couldn't even catch the spirit of God in any of their singing.

It sounded more like some Islamic way. It was wholly alien to my spirit. And the people were looking at us with such suspicion.

I had never felt more uncomfortable in a church in my life. I was looking around for the exit signs. Lord, you've bailed me out in many places.

And my faith has grown. But this is impossible. No way.

And we're going to get out of this tonight. And I'd say, well, what were you going to speak? I had no message. No, that's almost always my condition.

What would you rather do? Have messages? Or be a message? Be the Word made flesh. Be the expression of his resurrection life. And rest in that life.

Rather than the knowledge of messages that you could speak. I'm not making any light question. That question strikes at the heart of true discipleship.

And I was just about to be called on. I had not a word that I could think to say. And just moments before I was to get out of my seat, something was born from above in my spirit.

I had remembered the scripture somewhere, but I had never before ever spoken from it. From one of the minor prophets. Israel I have loved as a child.

But I have called my son out of Egypt. I said, Lord, no. That's a sufficient description.

That's a sophisticated word. The whole concept of sonship. True maturity that comes by coming out of the Egypt of flesh and of the world and its spirit.

Look at the way they're looking at us. They were being bathed in hostility. And Lord, they know that I'm a Jew.

And an American. So they'll think I'll be speaking as an imperialist and as a Zionist. Called my son out of Egypt.

There's no way that this can work. It's a formula for disaster. Lord, what would you have for me to do? The answer will not always be convenient.

It will not always agree with your reason and logic. It might altogether painfully contradict it. But then your mind is racing with a hundred other possibilities.

And all of a sudden occur to you. Which are a lot better than what the Lord has given you. You've got a choice to make.

In that moment. Moment by moment. So what does a fellow like me do? He dies.

I stood up by the pulpit. I took a deep breath as one going to his execution. Lord, if I had to get stoned to death, I would have preferred it in New York City than in Cairo.

And I began to speak. I have called my son out of Egypt. The most remarkable thing happened.

There came a quickening from heaven. A light shining round about that opened the understanding of this people. In a spiritually sophisticated word that many westerners would miss.

Crack, snap and pop. It broke. And they flooded out to the altar.

The pastor called his entire family to kneel before the altar. Broken and weeping before God. As I came and I laid hands on everyone praying prayers inspired by the spirit of God.

And when the service was over of course none of us wanted to leave. The house was full of the glory of God. The house was full of his fragrance that came out of the brokenness of obedience to break the hard vessels of God.

We went upstairs to the pastor's apartment and we had falafel together. Like manna from heaven. Egyptian food.

You know what I learned later? That pastor had cried out to God that very day. He said Lord I have been in Pentecost 26 years and I am finished. I cannot go on one day more.

I have tried every American gimmick device for success and nothing works. This is a dead end. This church is not growing.

It has no life. I am tired of even hearing my own preaching. It is repetitious and monotonous.

Our worship is not worship. It is an agony. I cannot go on.

Unless you show me another way I am finished. This is my last day. Because I didn't know that he had prayed that.

I had only been obedient to the I am. But that man received his answer. He came to visit us in Minnesota this summer.

His entire life has changed. His church has released him. He has a new vision from God.

Beginning with that day. To be an evangelist in 26 Muslim nations. You will never be able to calculate the amount of life that shall come through you.

That will touch all eternity. Because your vow came to a place of death. Into the dust.

When you found out who it is whom you have been abusing. And misusing. And appropriating.

And exploiting. For your own ends. I am Jesus.

Whom thou abuses, persecutes. And exploits. Down into the dust.

You saw a great light. Then came the question. What will you have me to do? He said, receive your sight.

And I will show you all the things that you will have to suffer for my namesake. And so shall it be for us also. This kind of conversion is not going to win you honors in the world.

It is going to win you persecution and reproach. Suffering and death. In the same verses of where we have been reading.

Men were immediately conspiring. The Jews to counsel to kill him. They went about to slay him.

This man has got to live, they cried. Have you infuriated the world like that? It is only infuriated by his life. When this is finished.

And the I am has become all in all. When in the glory of his light. All that was of you is brought into darkness.

Three days unable to see. Neither eating nor drinking. Led away by the hand as a child.

In complete dependency. In humility. That was to characterize all the rest of his life.

God's glory will not come out of any other kind of life. Than that. That is conversion.

Worth waiting for. Worth beseeching God for. Worth praying for.

A true light from heaven. Not just the relief of your immediate tension. Shall we pray for it now? It may not come now.

But let this not just be a prayer that concludes our days. But that continues to reverberate on. Looking to heaven.

Waiting for him. For so glorious an answer. Precious God.

Thank you for your love for us my God. Thank you that you are a God of truth. Who is jealous over us.

And wants to save us from shabby things. From substitute things. From cardboard paper mache things.

My God help us. We can't even break ourselves. But as far as we can meet you.

We can bring our bodies into your presence. We can bring our bodies into the posture of repentance. But our hope is in heaven.

That there might be a suddenly for us. The sound of a mighty rushing wind. That shall burn out our life with thy glory.

And make us the abandoned fools for Christ's sake that we must behave. Who live moment by moment. In an utterness toward God.

In a perfect obedience. For thy name's sake. For thy glory.

My God. Let thy fire fall. Let thy light fall.

Convert us to the uttermost. That you might send us. To convert others.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/14/SID14132.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/holl-03-anatomy-of-conversion/>

# *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](http://www.sermonindex.net)**