

Identifying the True Prophet - Part 1

by Art Katz

A true prophet is characterized by a respect for words and their meaning, and uses them carefully and judiciously, speaking with intrinsic authority and bearing the consequences of their message.

Duration: 55:50

Scripture: Proverbs 27:6, Isaiah 1:2-6, Isaiah 6:8, Jeremiah 9:24, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Prophet"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the prophetic call and the role of a prophet in proclaiming God's message. He emphasizes the importance of a prophet being able to see and articulate future events that have not yet come to pass. The speaker uses the example of Isaiah in the Bible, who warned the nation of Judah and Jerusalem about their sinful ways and the impending judgment. He highlights how Isaiah's vivid descriptions and ability to communicate the urgency of the situation were a final grace from God to avoid the coming judgment. The sermon emphasizes the need for people to recognize their true spiritual condition and repent before it is too late.

Transcript

So you have a blank page in your notes, and what are you putting on the top as a title? What is prophetic or the prophetic call? Something like that. You want to identify, feel for, this great phenomenon. So what would you say would necessarily be a required attribute or characteristic of one purporting to be a prophet? A respect for words and for their meaning.

He's not going to be one given to a gift of gab. He will not be loquacious, the word that I used this morning, about God with frequent prophesying. So his word will be judicious, timed, reserved, he will be circumspect, he'll be very careful about what issues from him.

But not only will he be careful about the content of the words, but also the manner in which they're being expressed. He will not give himself to soulful exuberance, or raise the decibels in order to sound more compelling. The moment that he condescends to any device by which he thinks it to be made more impressive, or to sound more authoritative, by effecting a certain tone of voice or appearance, he's ipso, null, in fact, false.

So it has to be the most stringent avoidance of flesh, the most careful avoidance of any manipulative thing to enhance his prophetic impression. That means that the weight of the word will rest entirely upon the one

who gives it. It will not be something enhanced by some authority in his personality, or some winsomeness, or some pseudo-anointing.

The word itself, and the authority of him who has given it, even if it's spoken in a mild monotone, will be sufficient to convey it. He does not need to enhance his speaking. And that one who will, and seeks with devices or such externalities, is by definition false.

So there's a real purity of soul. The authority has got to be intrinsic. That means that he's not one likely to speak often, but when he does, it commands a hearing.

We know that it's not a man giving an opinion. And so often in my own experience, and I don't want to draw extensively from that as if I'm a representative, I don't even know about my own identity, but I will say on the issue of Israel especially, I'm not giving you an opinion. I say to the congregation, what you're hearing from me is not an opinion.

It's a perspective that I have by virtue of the office that I enjoy. And you need to distinguish between a man giving an opinion and a man speaking out of the authority of his office. And I'm saying that what I'm now doing is that.

Spit out your guts if you don't like it. Or you're faced now with the issue. If it's not an opinion, the man says he's speaking out of his office.

Does he in fact have that office? Can we discern it? Can we recognize it? Can we sense the authority and the truth of it? Even if it's a perspective that is in opposition to what we have all along believed. Because almost invariably the prophet is going to bring a perspective that is in collision with that which has been up till now accepted as normative. It's not something that's going to be fitted in alongside.

It's going to displace and utterly put aside that which up till now has been received as being the respected truth. So that's to say that people will bristle because it's insecure to be moved out of the place of your conviction. You believed it so long, it's been so trusted, everybody else seems to subscribe to it.

And now you're hearing something that puts that perspective in great question. And even invalidates it. You have to put it aside.

So there's an issue of security. So for these reasons, prophets are resistive. And in the last analysis, if they are really threatening, they're killed.

The way to avoid the threat of a prophet's word is to remove the prophet himself. So almost invariably in the history of Israel's prophets, they end with a death sentence. Isaiah, according to legend, was sown in half.

Others were stoned. So the prophet is a threatening phenomenon. But if he delights in being a threat, he's in question.

If he takes a personal delight and enjoys being one who upsets the apple pot and brings attention to himself as being the expose, the radical purveyor of another truth, he's disqualified. He cannot take any delight in upsetting the apple pot. In fact, really, he ought to have a compassionate heart for the unrest of this quiet that he will cause by his speaking.

He's not enjoying this. I don't know that you'll ever find a prophet who enjoys being one. And those who enjoy it are at fault.

Those who run after it and want to be it, their very excitement and their romantic notion of what it means already indicates that they're phony. It's not a pleasant calling. It means rejection.

And if it means that, how does the man bear it? Because two of us is not affected by being rejected. By being rejected, not by strangers, but by those whom we know. And even those who are close to us.

And the very church to which we're devoted will have in it pockets of resistance that the fiercest time that I've had in recent memory was right here at Ben Israel. With men from out of our own Ben Israel community opposing me with such, what should I say, alacrity, such vehemence that I was astonished. But had to bear it.

So you can say this, a prophet has a history with God. And it's a history in how to bear rejection. A man has to be dealt with.

Someone, our brother quoted this morning from Isaiah, you'll fresh mountains and reduce them to chaff. I don't know how many times people have come to me and said, Art, I have a word for you from the Lord. Yes? That's that word.

You'll reduce mountains. You'll be a, what is that word? Freshing instrument. I smile.

Yeah, but what you don't know is that I need myself first to be fresh. If I'm going to be an instrument to fresh others, I must myself first be fresh. Because there are vagaries of soul and dispositions that linger that need to be dealt with so that when the freshing comes, it's a pure activity and there's no vested interest or satisfaction for the freshing instrument.

He's not enjoying it. He's not getting even. These things are so deep in our psyche.

So I'm saying all that to say this. A prophet by necessity must have a history in God of feelings, maybe even of an excruciating kind that if he were only a teacher, he would not be subject to that. Because in teaching, there's a certain impersonality.

It's the word, the exposition of the word. But in the prophetic exposition, the dimension of the man himself is so integral to what is expressed so that the man himself therefore must be sifted, must be refined, must be dealt with, must be purged, purified and not just once, but often, if not frequently. And that's why, more often than not, you're not going to find prophets that are happily married.

Pastors, yes. Teachers, yes. Prophets, rarely.

Because their marriage itself is part of that refinement, part of that schooling, part of that personal dealing. And on top of that, the prophet needs to come into the realm of God's own heart and his own grief. So if Israel has been unfaithful, apostate, or gone whoring after other gods, often, in my observation, prophetic men who are especially called to the burden of Israel need in some measure to know God's grief in their own life and experience.

They've got to know infidelity, unfaithfulness, things like that. Who's the great prophet that married a prostitute? Hosea. So the prophet is not some impersonal bearer of the Word.

He's relating the thought of God's heart, the mood of God's speaking. He's got to be in sync with God. He's got to be aligned in a way that few of us know.

And how does he come to that? It will not be conspicuous. It will not be visible. The deep history of men like that is hidden.

It's behind drawn shades and the interior life of the man that very few know, but he alone. But of necessity, there must be such a dimension. So we need to respect that and be in sympathy and prayer in the bringing forth of these rare men who not only will express for us the thought and heart of God, but communicate it in the right mood, the right tone, the urgency, the note of God's heart, the disposition.

How does he know that? Is this some kind of mechanical operation that the prophetic man has an auditory sense and he picks up the Word of God and then he just communicates it? That would be almost a travesty. He picks up the valences. He intuits the sense of God's disposition.

He shares the grief, the mood, the heart of God and communicates that. It's not just taking the Word and expositing it, it's interpreting it. He's communicating it in a way that God intends that we should understand it in the context of what our present life is and our future.

He not only warns of judgment, more often than not his Word is the judgment. And we see that in many instances, maybe the most conspicuous would be Isaiah 6. Go and tell. Who shall go for us? Whom shall we send? Send me.

Okay, you want to go? Go and tell. Say to this people, your ears shall be stopped, your heart shall be heavy, you'll not be able to understand, you'll not be able to believe, you'll not be able to be saved. Your word will judge that nation.

How do you like to bring a word of judgment? We like to bring a word of encouragement and receive a pat on the back and a chuck under the chin. Oh, thank you. But how do you like to be the bearer of a word that judges? A judgment, by the way, under which the nation of Israel stands to this day.

It has not been alleviated nor altered to this day. They are still under the judgment that came with Isaiah's Word and he's the bearer of it. Who can bring a word that will offend? Who does not need to be welcomed, applauded, gratified? Thank you, brother.

I needed to hear that. Who wants to be despised for bringing a severe word that judges? But for reasons of many kinds, I think that it's a man's calling. Not the least of the reasons will be that a woman would be much more sensitive to being rejected, would be much less disposed to bring hard things.

The nature itself, the feminine nature itself would militate against the severity that a prophet needs. So I would say for that and for other reasons it would be essentially a man's calling. If we look at Isaiah chapter 1, maybe we should look at it.

There is an indictment of the nation of the severest kind. But the heck of it is that it comes before the nation sees itself in this condition. The prophet stands in a kind of timeless place.

He's not limited by the present moment. He's not indifferent to it, but he's not fixed in things as men presently see them. He sees beyond.

He sees the thing, the reality to which the nation is moving in its apostasy and will come to that condition, but he speaks of it as if it already exists. He's in a special dimension of time by which the thing that is impending in future is already presently very real with him. If it were not that, he could not proclaim it.

So he's crying out and giving the nation a picture of the condition into which it's moving in time that if they repent of it, they need not face it. But he's got to project that image so vividly that it frightens them to the place of repentance. In a word, he's got to verbally bring a reality that has not yet come.

He's got to see a reality that no one else sees, but he sees prophetically as future, and he sees it as imminent. That is to say, it's at the door. It's threatening.

And he not only sees it, but he has an ability to proclaim it in such a way as to communicate the urgency to those who are unaware that they stand in such a place of jeopardy. This isn't bad. Are you guys writing this down? It's good stuff.

That's a remarkable calling that a man can see and articulate with such a reality those things that have not yet come to pass, which if he does not articulate them, they will come to pass and those who would have benefited from his warning will suffer the consequence. That is to say, he's a final grace from God to avoid the judgment that he sees as imminent, and for which he gives warning by the vividness of what he sees and his ability to describe it. And that's what we see here in Isaiah 1. It's the vision that Isaiah saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

And he cries out, I have nourished and brought up children, they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, the ass its master's crib. But Israel does not know, my people do not consider sinful nation.

Do you pick up on these A-H's or O-H's? This is a gut, a solar plexus cry. The distress, the note of sorrow, anticipating what will be the consequence if the nation continues in this condition. Sinful nation that is not even aware of its present condition, because we learn as we go on in the chapter, they're still performing sacrifices.

They're still performing the mosaic requirements of worship and think that by that they're placating and serving God. But he sees the nation as sinful, laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corruptors. They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel into anger, they have gone backward.

Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint from the sole of the foot even to the head. There's no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, putrefying sores that have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

Your country is desolate. Your cities are burned with fire. He's speaking of something as if it presently is, because that's how vividly he sees the future thing as now.

Your land, strangers devoured in your presence, and it is desolate, is overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, a shack, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers of the seed city. So here's a beautiful picture of the detail in which the prophet foresees Israel's coming devastation and judgment because the whole nation is laden with iniquity and sin and does not know it.

So they've got to receive the word of the prophet as being definitive and descriptive of the truth of their condition despite any corroborating evidence subjectively. You following that? As they look over their

situation, they're prospering, their vats are full, their barns are full, the animals are increasing, they're performing worship, they're doing all the necessary, they don't see the truth of their condition. Only this man is saying that what you think is the truth of your condition is an illusion.

From the top of your head to the soles of your foot, you're full of sores that need to be mollified and bound up. So the nation is faced with a conundrum, a predicament. What has the greater weight? The objective things that we see that tend to confirm us in our comfort and our safety zone and the status quo or this strange freaky man who sees us as sinful, full of sores that need to be bound up and at the very threshold of terrible devastation and judgment.

And he's all alone. He's not a committee. He's one man.

But that one man is speaking in behalf of God and sounding a warning contrary to every objective and subjective estimation that people employ. And they have a choice to make whether they continue in their false security on the basis of that which they naturally observe and feel about themselves and their self-satisfaction or heed the voice of this strange man as being the word of God and warning. This is the classic prophetic dilemma as the issue of the salvation of the nation if he's heeded.

And more often than not, he's not heeded. He's rejected. But he's got to speak with a certain credibility that is compelling because everything stands in opposition to things as he sees them and proclaims them.

He alone is representing another view and has the audacity to say that that view is very God's. So look, we're not told much about the preparation of such men that when Elijah comes on the scene of history and confronts Ahab as the Lord my God lives before whom I stand it shall not rain nor dew but according to my word. He's already a tempered, seasoned vessel.

But his history, how he came to that is not given us. It's hidden. But you can believe that it has taken place.

These men do not grow on trees because they have to stand alone in bringing an unwelcome word with great courage and be able to receive rejection and maybe even the risk of their own lives. They have had to be prepared at the hand of God. So I'll say this.

We should not be sophomoric, adolescent and seek such a calling or having been hinted that we might have it be active in our own fulfillment of it. Because many purported young prophet ruins himself by his self-conscious attempt to fulfill his own calling. If it's the calling of God let God fill it and don't you go out of your way to seek to it.

So this self-consciousness of being prophetic is the undoing maybe of some valid candidates who are immature about it and think that they have an obligation themselves to become the thing to which they're called. He who called you will fulfill it if indeed it's your calling. If you're a real candidate, what you should welcome is everything that comes from the hand of God against your flesh.

You welcome all of the work of the cross. You want that ax to be laid to the root. You want the Lord to deal not only with the root, the branches but what do they call the tendrils of the subtlety of those delicate roots that permeate the soul.

So that would be welcomed. But a self-conscious attempt to be the prophet is destructive of being the prophet. So in a certain sense, isn't it remarkable as profound as that calling is and men knew themselves to be that there's ironically at the same time a call for an un-self-consciousness about it and a certain kind

of what naturalness without this preoccupation I'm the prophetic man.

So if anything, such a man has got to be real and any affectation, any self-consciousness is already a step in the wrong direction. So God is eminently real. God is the source of reality and the prophet because of the measure of the reality of his own soul is in the place to sense and pick up the disposition of God in his word so it's a remarkable thing to have a calling of an ultimate kind and to conduct yourself with a certain kind of selflessness and artlessness that art has got to be artless Did I say what I'm saying? Because if you're self-conscious and how am I affecting, what impression am I giving it's self-defeating.

Someone said that we shouldn't look for prophets because they wear camel's hair clothing and are radically conspicuous as wilderness prophets but be able to recognize them when they wear free peace suits and in no way does their apparel or their awkward behavior in any way indicate their call that in every way they are natural, unaffected men because if they're not then it detracts from the truth of their call but when he says, woe is me, I'm undone, I live in the midst of a people of unclean lips, he's experiencing the truth of the condition of the nation as being his own and if he did not have that identification, that union that awareness, he would not be the mouthpiece of the nation so he cannot be in a place that is superior to the people that he's addressing but he has to come to

them in the strickenness and brokenness that I share with you that condition and we see that beautifully in chapter 9 of Daniel when Daniel cries out, we have sinned against you Daniel identifies with the sins of the nation though he himself is personally impeccable in his righteousness and his relationship with the Lord he identifies with the fallenness of the nation and God hears that prayer so that's a remarkable ambivalence that the prophet is called to holiness to a walk with God of an exacting kind and yet it cannot be the basis for a sense of superiority over and above the condition of his own people isn't that a paradox, that Paul himself says I'm less than the least of all saints he's not some kind of false modesty of a self-effacing kind Paul really believed that about himself

and it was true about him not just as the persecutor but as the chief apostle he was less than the least of all saints because the greater that you grow in the depth of your spirituality the more you're aware of the truth of your condition that you're less than the least so this is a remarkable contradiction where you're called to holiness to walk with God against the flesh and that you welcome the ruthless dealings of God against your flesh and yet you're called to identify with this information not in some kind of symbolic way alone but authentically as much as Jesus entered the waters of baptism in Jordan and John said what are you doing here and Jesus said it's needful that all righteousness be fulfilled I need to be baptized I need to enter the waters of repentance and judgment I

myself am exempt from all sin but I cannot be to Israel its savior if I do not identify with the nation in her condition that's true of all prophets see how ambivalent how contradictory that is called to holiness and yet to identify with the nation in its worst condition I'm in the midst of a people of unclean lips and I myself am a man of unclean lips if Isaiah did not see that and truly cry out over that he would never have been sent in fact we want to distinguish between true and false prophets as is revealed in the way in which they handle the subject of Israel merely to applaud the present state and desire its success and to pray for the peace of Jerusalem though it's pleasing to hear does not get at the mystery of Israel as is propounded by Paul which is an apocalyptic view that

what has if they're falling away has brought blessings to Gentiles what shall their return be but life from the dead that there's a death, there's a devastation there's a judgment through which Israel must pass before

it shall be life for the nations so I'll repeat this in different ways the issue of the cross has got to be central to the perception of all reality there must be a term for this in Latin the essential requirement both of the prophet and the apostle is the recognition of the centrality of the cross as the very underlying principle of all reality understand that? that it's the axiom of God that presupposes everything it touches everything in the last analysis the issue of all issues is the issue of the cross even before the advent of the cross Isaiah would know it in his

spirit Jeremiah, the prophets that the cross has somehow to do with the necessity for a suffering and a death that precedes a glory a death that precedes a resurrection that there's something foundational to all reality to which no issue is exempt and no prophet is exempt and the Lord himself was not exempt and the nation is not exempt the false prophets want a successful Israel without the necessity for the cross they don't want an apocalyptic scenario they don't want a suffering, they don't want a time of Jacob's trouble they don't want an Ezekiel 37 in which men are called out of their graves they want a gradual progressive amelioration of Israel's condition that is to say an improvement which is another word for humanism it's a cross avoiding thing so I'm just making a flat out

statement that the cross in what it means, what it implies is at the foundation of all reality and in my own experience in 42 years of the faith no matter what the issue in the body of Christ or marriage or Israel's situation if you scratch deeply enough in the last analysis what I always see invariably is the issue of the cross cross avoidance is probably the heart of the church's present melancholy condition we are cross avoiding we avoid suffering we don't like calamity or devastation or judgment we want success this desire for Israel's success as the present state is only a projection by charismatics who want a comparable success in their own present life in their own religion, in their own institutions in their own churches, in their own profession and marriage and so on success but

what is at the heart of the cross not the issue of success but the issue of the glory of God forever the issue of the cross as axiomatic and central to all of his seeing but that in the moment of the delivery of the word of God he is experiencing the cross the prophetic message in its delivery is a cross experience it's a form of dying you're looking into the face of rejection, of hostility and you're called to speak something that you know is calculated to offend and yet you're required to bring it so it's a death cross experience in the obedience of prophetic delivery and it's not just subscribing to the truth of the cross ideologically it's experiencing it in the excruciating moments of your obedience that I've had personally to bear for 40 years is that my marriage is not a textbook

classic happy, successful marriage well then how then can he occupy this office if his marriage is not this and so not only is it a stigma and a reproach to bear but it's one that cannot be answered and you just simply have to bear it but you know that somehow it's intrinsic and necessary to the calling but those who are outside that calling that are seen only mechanically and have this expectation that men who are in positions of leadership should be the exemplars of the successful marriage you can't answer them you have only to suffer the reproach and that suffering itself is part of the prophetic burden so not only is the cross the experience of the man in this proclamation it's his experience of the reproaches that he bears in his calling but it's also the power of his proclamation

something is issued when it comes forth out of death that carries a power that is needful than a communication of the unwelcome message if you're willing to bear the reproach and bring the unwelcome word and suffer it something issues in a power that was released by what Jesus bore at the cross so we need to factor in that if the bearing of the message is not itself a cross experience it likely will not have the

concomitant power anointing confirmation to register that message upon the hearers so who can bear the cross like that as reproach as experience as part and parcel of being formed at God's hand the prophet has the most intimate knowledge of the cross and in his moments of ultimate obedience he's again required to experience the cross in his faithfulness and proclamation and

because he will the word will have a power and an authority that it would otherwise lack but the cross is central so one of the ways of distinguishing true and false prophets is to sense or see to what degree are these men knowledgeable are they in the realm of the cross have they made themselves open in tender days for the dealings of God, the requirements of God, the siftings of God or are they insulated, protected and kept can you sense in meeting a saint the degree to which the cross has been part and parcel of his or her life do you have to hear the actual testimony or can you sense from the personality the demeanor, the way in which that person conducts himself, even the voice what kind of history that person has with the cross you know that there's a measure of suffering in that

life and you don't need to know the particulars you can intuit and sense that this one has such a history such a relationship and I would just assume that we ought to discern that in men who purport to be prophetic and if it's missing then there's something telltale that's gone, their play acting a role is itself ipso facto a pretty conclusive evidence that such a one is not a prophet if he were the thing that would be most alive in his spirit is that which is most pertinent to the church in this hour and I can't think of any subject more pertinent to the church than the mystery of Israel as Paul propounds it so the absence of that consideration is itself an evidence that would put in question the truth of that calling so often I will run out of my way to hear men who are called the

prophets or the oracle of the hour to hear what they're saying and what I hear more often than not is a little homily they'll give a little bible sketch in order to get the word out of the way that they can go more directly into the things which the people have come the personal prophecy but I do not hear oracular statements if you're an oracle of the hour then the oracles of God should be forthcoming we need to hear the weighty statements of God pertinent to the hour and for me that has got to center in the issue of Israel as God would have us to perceive it so I've said in many places to those Christian Zionists who applaud the present state of Israel and desire its success that not to see the issue of Israel apostolically and prophetically as mystery and the necessity for a time of

Jacob's trouble and a sifting, a dying, a resurrection is not to see it you're as much opposed to God in your humanistic applause of present Israel as those who might be patently antisemitic and opposed to Israel that the only true definitive position is that which is in agreement with what Paul states in Romans 9-11 and that can only come by revelation Paul said I would not have you to be ignorant of this mystery it's a mystery that they have not apprehended or been apprehended by we have to ask why and that they're not even chafed for the inability to understand that mystery to just let it go by is itself a statement but it may well be that the mystery cannot be revealed to those who are proud who are hostile, who have an antagonism toward Israel, toward the Jew who do not want to

consider that there's a national destiny that they don't deserve it any of those attitudes would ipso facto nullify anyone for the communication of the mystery and therefore the ability themselves to express it but it ought to be the thing that's looked for the Lord, as we mentioned a few days ago the Lord's calling for me to Germany as the nation key to Israel's final redemption living in Denmark and having frequent occasions to be in Germany, but silent so that the Lord gave the burden years in advance of any prospect of expressing it in which something had to be contained and not expressed so for example the prophetic man

will go to a public meeting and he'll see horrendous things of a carnal kind that need to be identified or rebuked but he has not as liberty to address them so the

spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet that is to say, merely because he sees something is not ipso facto invitation to express it he's got to wait for the moment of God's choosing something like Paul in Acts 16 that the moniachal women went for days crying out, these are the men of the Most High God who want us the way of salvation, and this did she many days and Paul never said a word, but at a certain given moment, Paul turned and commanded that spirit to come out of her, and it did and that sent him to prison, to beatings, and to confinement so Paul as apostle prophet he could have brought a rebuke, he could have attended to that spirit at an earlier time but he had no release, it's something like watchman knee, lifting his arm to knock on a door and the life is out of his

arm, the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet, shows there's a tension that a man has to weigh up and to know when he's at liberty to express and to contain, and that the moment of execution is critical he's not to do it because he's irritated was Paul bugged by this woman with a mocking demoniacal voice these men are the servants of Most High was there some impulse to shut her up long before but he dared not indulge that, there came a moment in the timing of God when it was right so a prophet is one who can keep his spirit he's not subject to impatience he's not moved upon by by factors that will relieve him of tension or anxiety he doesn't need an immediate relief he's not the now generation he can hold something and contain it that's a discipline but most of us, we hear

something right away we need to express it and we're instant so that means that the man himself is tempered, and the issue of his relief is not the issue, the issue is the issue of obedience in the moment of God's timing that the purposes of God be served and not that he be alleviated of a personal tension so again, what's the word for all this I would say maturity, the prophet is a tempered vessel with the history in God by which his impatience has been dealt with he has gone through situations where he has seen things that he had every impulse to address and maybe the Lord had allowed him and then wrapped his knuckles by showing him it was a premature thing and he has learned through an experience like that to wait upon the Lord and the Lord allows that tension of freedom where the

prophet will exercise himself in obedience we're talking about not just the calling of a single man we need to be reminded we're talking about the calling of the church can you imagine the church that comes to this maturity this selflessness, this ability to maintain a control and does not act out of impulse for the moment because it brings an immediate relief it does not need immediate relief it can bear a tension that is yet unresolved but what characterizes our present Christianity is that the one meeting has got to be all that people have got to be sent home happy you don't send them home where they're rattled and they've been shaken and faced with a new dilemma and it's not resolved for them in the first hearing they have to go home and brood over to come back but the tendency of our

present Christianity is to bring immediate satisfaction this is the now generation you get it all at one time but the prophetic man can wait he can live with something yet unanswered with unresolved tension and not come apart at the seams knowing there will come a time when that resolution will come when you come to a paradox in the faith when you come to a seeming contradiction that rattles your cage that threatens your faith and there's no immediate answer, hold tight wait upon the Lord and sure enough however long it takes that when that resolution comes and clarity comes it's a door of revelation into depths of God that would not otherwise have been seen so I'm saying all that to say this are you prophetic sufficiently to bear the tension of things yet unresolved how about an

unresolved marriage an unresolved family an unresolved situation in the church a tension for which many people will leave rather than bear it because they can't stand the tension my definition of a saint is one who bears the tensions of the faith and does not insist upon an immediate relief can wait upon the Lord for when his answer comes it will be an entree into a dimension of revelation and glory, worth waiting for we are guilty of contributing to an atmosphere in the church that desires novelty diversion, excitement we want to hear a thus saith the Lord we want some kind of radical pronouncement because there's a kind of boredom that prevails in the church for which we want uplift what is that saying? we can't live with monotony we can't live with the ordinariness of life it has to be

relieved by an excitement that encourages that soulish soul to bring something of a thus saith the Lord that the Lord hath not said so there's a requirement for the church to be able to bear monotony I remember when we first came out here and our kids wanted to go to the shopping mall in those days we didn't have a car in every garage we had maybe one or two cars for the entire community and every ounce of gas had to be waived because of our poverty you couldn't just go into town and so I would say to the kids of those who want their goods what do you want to go in for? what do you need to get?

I don't need to get anything there, I just want to see the merchandise I'm bored by looking at the same faces every day I need to break the monotony I want to get out there for the diversity so we're much more sensual the world is schooling us for novelty, for diversion, for distraction for excitement we don't know how to live in the constancy of the everyday and to delight in its ordinariness and to find how very precious and special it is it does not have to be alleviated by pseudo-excitements we need to enjoy the saints probe them and receive the depths of what is in each vessel so there's a remarkable connection with the condition of the church and the condition of its priests or its prophets we reflect and react upon one another as I'm saying, we've created an atmosphere that

encourages the excitement of false things so we're guilty for affecting that atmosphere and what we're betraying in the last analysis is an inadequate knowledge of God as if we can assume that God does all that much speaking and in fact when those prophecies come what in fact is being said that is more than commonplace that is more than just matter of fact kinds of things that need not be articulated why would God go through the process supernaturally of speaking inanities and yet no one criticizes it, no one takes it to task no one raises the question, is this God or is this man and because we don't raise the question we're allowing something to go forth as being valid which is not valid, and not the least of the consequences is to dull us so that the next time we're less able to hear

God and more disposed to the thing that is false so there's a certain obligation for the church to keep its heart with all diligence and to be careful about false prophecy and things that emanate from the souls of men rather than the spirit and to weigh them and that the atmosphere of the church is such that if it is false, if it has issued out of the soul we can bring that correction in the moment and the person who gave it will not come apart at the seams she, likely, or he will even be more grateful for being corrected so we're diligent to keep an environment of truth in which correction can come to keep us from moving in the realm of soul and no one comes apart at the seams for that reason or is embarrassed, quite the contrary we count ourselves privileged that we live in an

atmosphere of truth, of honesty and love in which those things can be publicly expressed and be received as being very grace and very love without offense because we know it's coming, the correction is coming from a brother or a sister or leaders who desire our best interest, they're not being malicious they're not fingering a personality that's supposed to make her an object of public ridicule can you imagine an

atmosphere like this? this is the church, this is the prophetic church and in the absence of that, we're letting so much go by that is spurious, questionable if not outright false and it lessens the whole credibility of the church itself our basic problem? we don't know God as we ought if we knew him better, we know he's not all that loquacious he's not all that talkative he's

not all that chatty he's not given to bring predictable statements that add nothing to what we already understand so that when he speaks, it's unique, it's distinct it's born of the moment of a radical kind and we're in a place to hear and to appreciate the rare pronouncements of God that are not all that frequent and we don't need that frequency because a lot of it is just confirmation or fleshly security that because he's speaking, we know he knows us or we're loved why don't we know that we're loved without these supposed confirmations why don't we know, as I said at the end of the prayer time, that we are accepted in the beloved we don't have to run to receive a personal prophecy to know that God knows us and that we're loved there's a deep insecurity in the church we don't know as we

ought to know and because of that insecurity we're guilty of participating in the atmosphere of unreality and pseudo-prophecy and novelty and excitements that lessen the whole quality, the character of the church, its witness and robs us from being the witness to Israel for which they wait as much as he foresees the future judgment has a sense of the things that are imminent that are at the door he also sees the past he has as much a grasp of the past as he has of the future that is to say, the issue of covenant God's historic faithfulness to Israel the whole deep tradition that the nation has forgotten is alive in his spirit so that part of his function is not only to communicate the immediacy of the future but to bring the nation to the awareness of its past that it doesn't lose its

significant past, its origin with God so he's a remarkable man, standing between the past and the future in a way that the church would otherwise lose it in this little book, Gerhard von Rad German Old Testament scholar speaking of the prophets they are conscious of being placed inside a historical continuum with wide perspectives over both past and future within it, each prophet stands as it were at the crossroads where God's dealing with Israel have been almost stationary, suddenly dramatically begin to move again the place in which they raise their voice is a place of supreme crisis, indeed almost a place of death, insofar as the men of the period of crisis were no longer reached by the force of old appointments and were promised life only as they turned to what was to come all the

prophets share a common conviction that they are exactly at that turning point in history which was crucial for the existence of God's people this awareness of the past what God has spoken, the covenants that he has made the things that have been forgotten are alive in the prophet's spirit and even when he speaks of the things that are present on future he's either expressing or intimating that history, that past, that tradition to bring the nation into the correct reassessment and awareness of its own identity because there's something in the national consciousness that forgets but for the prophet this is alive so he has a remarkable capacity for the past as well as for the future you can almost say that he will only be effective for the future to the degree that he has a grasp on the

things that are past so there's a place for that kind of prophetic remembrance in such a way as to vividly bring it to the recall of the nation that tends to forget their God

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/identifying-the-true-prophet-part-1/>

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