

Jap-04 True Fellowship

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the necessity of true fellowship and mutual confession among believers to experience the glory of God and strengthen the church community.

Duration: 55:43

Scripture: Leviticus 11:44, Psalm 24:7-10, Matthew 16:24, John 4:24, 1 Corinthians 14:26, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Hebrews 10:19-20, James 5:16, 1 Peter 4:17, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Japanese"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of feeling burdened and convicted to confess their faults in church. They emphasize the importance of confession in building a true community and moving from an institutional mindset to a more authentic church experience. The speaker encourages everyone, including ministers, women, and single men, to form small groups and confess their faults to one another. The ultimate goal is to open the gates for the King of Glory to enter and bring about transformation and holiness in the church.

Transcript

I think we are at a critical point in the Lord's unfolding with us. In a sense, everything has been preparation for now. Now I think the Lord is waiting for something from us.

It's time to act upon the Word. To turn the Word into an event. By being more than hearers only, but doers as well.

So I want to speak to you now about a lost art, a lost practice among modern Christians. It's the art of confession. Confess your faults one to another.

That you might pray one for another and be healed. How little do we avail ourselves of this grace from God. We are moral cowards and afraid.

And even within the fellowship we live in a solitary way unto ourselves. The genius of the Church is New Testament fellowship. The Greeks even have a word for it, koinonia.

This is more than meeting with one another outside the Church in the foyer to say, How are you doing brother? How are you sister? That kind of shallow fraternity the world also knows. Koinonia is another kind of relationship altogether. It's the same kind that the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit enjoy together.

It is burning and intense and glorious. To see this in Japan is the ultimate triumph of the faith. The land of saving faith.

The land of not revealing your true feelings. The land of concealing your emotions. A polite smile for every occasion.

No matter what the occasion is. This is cultural but it's not heavenly. In the New Testament we read about the First Church.

Great grace was upon them all. And with power gave they testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those that believed were together.

This is more than sitting alongside each other in pews. The believers had broken through into a new quality of relationship by the Holy Ghost. Mere Sunday services were not enough to express it.

They had to go from house to house daily breaking bread. The First Church was not a mere Sunday society. Exhort one another daily while it is yet today.

Encourage one another daily. How we have lost the sense of these things. That even when we're together we're not together.

We can share the same rooms, the same building, the same facilities. Be seated side by side and live under the same roof and not yet be together. The physical structure of itself will not determine the question.

It does not take place in and of itself. It does not take place in and of itself. It's not automatic.

It requires a willful and earnest participation. But modern Christianity does not require us to be participants. It only requires us to be spectators.

We can go through entire services and not once open our mouths and speak. Nothing is required of us but singing some choruses together. While we all look up to an elevated platform where one man is overworking.

It is as if we are all looking up to Christ, who is standing on a higher platform than we are. When we come together in the Bible, it is written that we should have a mutual understanding of the Trinity, the Trinity and the Trinity. Every time the saints gather together, it should be a glory.

Not a predictable performance. The monotony of one Sunday being like the other. By such a means, the gate will never open for the King of Glory to come in.

We have a choice before us always. Are you a school or a community? Are you an institution or the family of God? It's evident which is the easier of the two. It's easier to be institutionalized.

It's easier to hide in the crowd. But the faith does not call us to that which is easy. It calls us to that which is glorious.

But there is always a suffering which precedes the glory. That's what the cross means. That's why it's the statement of the faith.

It's the symbol of open and public shame. It's a pain that we ourselves don't want to experience. And yet it is the heart of the matter in confessing our faults one to another.

Many of us have been harassed or bothered by sins over which we do not seem to be able to obtain the victory. We keep confessing them to God but nothing happens. Within a day we are committing the same sin again.

It's not long before the confession to God just becomes an empty ceremony. Are you saying that we should not confess our sins to God? Is that what you're saying? No, I'm saying that that is only half the story. The cross has a vertical member and a horizontal member.

We need to make our confessions to God but we need also to make our confessions to men. The first brings us relief from heaven, the release of guilt from heaven, forgiveness. But the second actually breaks the power on the earth.

It's easy to confess our sins privately to God but much more difficult to confess our sins to our brother on earth. But it's this that breaks the sin's power for it deals with the very issue of pride. What is true church? An environment in which we are free to confess our sins one to another.

Because it is only in that condition that the grace of God can help us. He is a God of truth and not the God of hypocrites. And His mercy is quick to meet us when we come before Him on the basis of truth.

I've been a believer now 18 years and I've been in full time service 15 years. And I've spoken at YWAM bases all over the world. I can almost predict what happens when the Spirit of God begins to break upon the people.

The first confessions are always very general. Lord, help me. Lord, break me.

Lord, change me. And then if the Spirit is permitted to yet go further and deeper, you hear another order of confession. Lord, I confess that I am neglectful.

I'm lazy and slothful. I don't read my Bible as often as I should. My prayer life is inadequate.

But we are still at the surface. Still only symptoms. There are much deeper sins beneath which we have not the courage to bring into the light.

And therefore we continue to suffer them. God has given us every enablement and every ability to be free. We have the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Himself.

That we can walk in the light together, having fellowship one with another. But we don't avail ourselves of what God's grace has provided. We sit in a congregation, but we're not together.

We are often islands unto ourselves. Suffering our own private struggle personally and quietly. Because we will not act in obedience to God's Word.

Confess your faults one to another. This is the hand that opens the bolt that the King of Glory might open. And everything that I spoke this morning personally, I'm now speaking corporately.

This gate that needs to be opened for the King of Glory to come in, is not going to be opened by a single personal hand. But the corporate hand of the Body of Christ together. A corporate hand which is also a

clean hand.

Do we realize that what we do in our own privacy affects the entire Body of Christ? What we do in our privacy can stain or even break the fellowship. It can strengthen or weaken it. What we are as a body of people is the statement of the sum total of all of our lives.

Not one of us lives unto ourselves. A brother or sister's moral failure will affect the entire body. This brother writes, Every act of self-control is a service to the fellowship.

There is no sin in thought, word, or deed, no matter how personal or secret, that does not inflict injury upon the whole fellowship. We are members of a body, not only when we choose to be, but in our whole existence. The Body of Christ is more than terminology.

This is more than a matter of technicality or nomenclature, language. This is awesome spiritual fact known to God and to Satan. In Ephesians 3.10 Paul says, It's by the church that God makes manifold His witness, His wisdom, to the powers of the principalities of darkness.

Ephesians 3.10 You need to mark that verse. To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. Are you listening children? I want to say that that now is now.

Now by the church and by no other means. This is not an individual matter, it's a corporate matter. And that is contrary to the whole spirit of the modern world.

The world encourages you in your individualism. Notice I did not say individuality, individualism. And the irony is that you never become an individual by it.

You never do become a true individual by it. But the world wants to encourage you always to think in terms of your own personal self. My money, my time, my future, my life.

And we bring this concept right into the kingdom. My ministry. My church.

My denomination. My program. We have no sense of the corporateness of God.

I love an expression of a brother who describes the Godhead as a sweet company. God himself is a sweet company. Are we a sweet company? That is the question.

Are we a pure company? And I tell you what, I need you to be pure personally. I cannot be pure by myself. The pressures of the world are too great for me alone.

I need the strength that I get from my brothers. I need the encouragement I get from my brothers. I need the prayer that I get from my brothers.

Not general prayers, but particular prayers. According to the weaknesses that I have made known in my confession. That is the difference between the church and a religious society.

A church is for sinners being saved by grace. Where they can acknowledge to each other that they are sinners being saved. And on that basis have true fellowship.

You cannot have it with false appearances. You cannot have it with false appearances. When have you confessed a fault last to a brother? Just think on that.

When I was being trained to be a missionary to the Jews. I was young in the faith. And I was having a particular problem with my oldest son.

The problem was that the son was so much like me that I resented it. He irritated me. He was such an egotistical kid.

He was always getting into the middle of everything. Always got to be heard. Always got to have your attention.

You know the way mothers are. They are very indulgent. They don't seem to see these things.

The mother always is indulgent and never sees these defects. And so the father is always overreacting and very harsh in his discipline. This was becoming a serious problem in my life.

And I was about to go to a service, a mid-week service, when my son acted up in his characteristic way. So I hit him. Pow! And my wife got angry with me.

As I left for the prayer meeting, she slammed the door behind me and she cried, Go tell them what a great saint you are. Go tell them what a great saint you are, as the door slammed behind me. So I'm driving to the church and justifying myself.

This kid had it coming. This was long overdue. My wife was wrong.

When is she going to see the light? But my heart was very heavy. But now I had to arrange my face. I was coming into church.

It's time now to be spiritual. And I came in. The service had already begun and they were taking testimonies.

Yes, Sister Jones, what has the Lord done for you this week? Well, I want to say that this week the Lord... Empty ceremony. But from the moment I sat down in the pew, the Spirit of the Lord was saying to me, Confess your faults one to another. No matter which way I changed my position, again and again the Lord said, Confess your faults.

So finally I found my hand going up over my head. Oh yes, Brother Katz, our Jewish brother. He thought I had some happy reports.

So I stood up trembling. My knees were knocking. I was flashing hot and cold spells.

My voice was a squeak. I said, From the time I sat down in this church, God has been saying to me, Confess your faults one to another. I said, I am a young Christian.

I have never seen this done as long as I have been a Christian. I am a young Christian and I have never seen this done as long as I have been a Christian. I may be making a fool of myself even now and perhaps I shouldn't be saying this.

Maybe this is not the time. Have you ever noticed it never seems to be the time? Have you noticed it never seems to be the right time? But I have to say that I have a fault that I must confess. I have been acting in a way toward my son that is not becoming as a father.

Or as a Christian or as a minister of God. And I told the church the shameful details. And there was a dead silence.

Nobody knew what to say. It had never happened before. Even the pastor didn't know what to say.

I stood there like a fool for what seemed to be an eternity. I stood there like a fool for what seemed to be an eternity. It was the place of open shame.

It was the place of open shame. We think that Jesus was crucified with a loin cloth on? We think that Jesus was crucified with a loin cloth on? Where does it say that in the scripture? One of the worst features of crucifixion was the open, public, naked shame. One of the worst features of crucifixion was the open, public, naked shame.

How many of us know him in the fellowship of that suffering? How many of us know him in the fellowship of that suffering? Are you a Japanese who happens to be a Christian? Or a Christian who happens to be Japanese? Are you acting in the light of the cross of Christ Jesus? In that moment of terrible silence as I stood there, some woman had gotten up on the other side of the church and she stood and she made a public confession. Only God knows how long she had been holding that under the surface of her life. It was like a volcano erupting.

And the glory of God came down. I don't remember how long we were standing on our feet. The glory of God fell.

We got lost in the cloud of God's glory. I don't know how long we were lost in God. We were waiting for revival, waiting for revival.

Some fancy American evangelist would come and bring us revival. But the moment that we confessed, revival came. And I'll never forget the pastor's final comment that night when we went home walking on clouds.

I'll never forget his final comment. He said, look what happened when only two stood in obedience to the Word of God and confessed their faults. What would happen if we all were obedient to the Word? This is where community takes place.

This is where we move from institution to community. From casual fellowship to koinonia. That point is confession.

So I want to turn the rest of the time over to an experiment. The time is too short for us to play at being Christians. The King of Glory is outside the gate waiting to come in.

Confession pulls the bolt that allows him to enter. It's the means by which the body is made and kept pure. There is nothing so shameful about us that God cannot receive it.

Not one of us should look down upon the other as being superior when we hear someone else's confession. We should each see ourselves as the chief of sinners. This brings the glory of God.

This is walking in the light as He is in the light. Having fellowship one with another. It's at the heart of true church.

We have been sitting like this far too long looking at the back of each other's heads. It is only in beholding each other's faces that we go on from glory to glory. So here is what I would like for us to do.

How many ministers do we have in this room, Japanese ministers? Pastors, ministers, one, two, three, four, five, six. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. There are about eight.

Maybe we could have two groups of four each. And then perhaps we could have groups of two or three of the women together. And groups of two or three of the single men.

You say, then brother, what do we do once we are together? Confess your faults one to another. Brother, I need to acknowledge something to you. As this brother was speaking earlier today and he mentioned such and such a point, I was pricked.

When this brother was speaking earlier and he made a certain point, I was pricked. I need to confess I have been ambitious about my own ministry. I have this stubborn moral problem.

Much of my energy is drained in wrestling in the night hours alone in my bed. Brother, I have this weakness. Pray for me.

I think God will hear that prayer and answer it. I think something will break in the atmosphere. I think light will permeate the body.

And that's not to say that it's going to be finished here. But I want you to catch the taste of it. We need to pass through the veil.

We need to have this experience. We need to experience the grace of God in it. We might be encouraged to go on like this daily.

For there is no other way to keep the heart pure and the hands clean. But the blood of Jesus that is powerful when we are in truth and in the light. We need to break through into the reality of the New Testament life.

The King of Glory is waiting to come in. So let's pray together. And tell the Lord we have not been this way heretofore.

This is new ground. We have not been this way before. Lord, we need your grace.

We're not playing a game here. We are earnest believers. And we yearn for the glory of God to be revealed in this land.

We want Japan to see something more than conventional missionary Christianity. We want the glory of God to come in and come down. And we are willing ourselves to take every obstruction out of the way.

We want to make straight a highway for the coming of the Lord. We want to make the crooked way straight. And the rough places smooth.

We want to raise up the valleys of depression. And lower the mountains and the hills of pride. Lord, be merciful to us.

Help us in this. We want to be citizens of heaven more than we are citizens of Japan. You had no opportunity to save face.

You gave your face to those who plucked the beard from it. And you could not even cover your manhood with your hands on the cross. You were naked before all.

How then shall we hide our sins from each other? When you have died to make us free. Give us courage by the Holy Spirit. Even the spirit of truth.

We want to be changed. We want to be purged. We want to be holy.

As our Father in heaven is holy. That we might together as one hand pull the bolt that opens the gates. That the King of Glory might come into this land.

Thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus. Hallelujah.

Thank you Lord. Thank you Jesus. Hallelujah.

Thank you Lord. Judgment begins in the house of God. And in the house of God with the priests first.

We judge ourselves, we need not be judged. So I want to ask the ministers first if they'll take their chairs. Maybe we can have a little cluster of three or four here by the piano.

Maybe the ministers on this side of the room can meet here. The ministers on this side of the room can meet in this corner. And then find room for yourselves, two or three, the girls together and the men together.

Open your hearts to each other. Let the King of Glory in.

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