

K-019 the Shaping of Godly Character

by Art Katz

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being conformed to God's image and living a holy and righteous life in a corrupt world.

Duration: 1:00:00

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 55:6-7, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 4:22-24, 1 Peter 1:15-16

Topics: "Godly Character"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the experience of a conference called Shekinah 74. The conference was established with the expectation that the glory of God would fall upon the attendees. However, instead of experiencing God's presence, there was a revelation of sin in the camp. The speaker describes the current state of society as amoral, undisciplined, and pleasure-seeking, lacking virtues such as decency and respect. The sermon emphasizes the need for repentance and a return to the simple virtues of patience, honesty, courage, responsibility, and kindness.

Transcript

It's a privilege to bring the opening night talk and also to share the platform with Stuart Dowerman and the Wailing Wall. Let's give them another applause for the beautiful music. Let's cover this ministry with our prayer.

It's beautiful and it's spiritual and pray that God will open a special doors for it among our Jewish people in this country and in the world. I'm going to ask you to stand with me in prayer for this message. Also a special request that has come in for prayer for a Jewish mother, a believer, who is at the Memorial Hospital, who is dying.

It says that they don't know if she'll make it through the night. Please can we all lift her up, she's a believer. I'm thinking of other Jewish mothers who are also approaching death, including my own, in this great city by the tens upon tens of thousands, and throughout the country and the world, who have not the consolation that this precious woman is going to find, if it shall please the Lord this night to receive her in the bosom of Abraham.

Let's pray that the grace of God will attend her bedside, whatever his precious will is for her life, and there need not be any frowning or despair if she's going to be joined with the Holy One of Israel this night in all

fullness. And let's pray also for our Jewish mothers, all our mishpucha, our kinsmen, in this city. Hallelujah.

Let's join our hearts together. Precious Holy God, Lord. Precious Holy God.

Gracious God of mercy, Lord. Reign your mercy, mighty God, in the knowledge of your salvation upon Jewish mothers, mighty God, this night and in the soon coming days, mighty God, throughout this great city, Lord, and over this earth, precious God. Spirit of consolation, Lord, attend to this one.

Mightily breathe upon her and comfort her heart, Lord, and give her sense of anticipation for a joy that will soon be hers. Oh, precious God, whose heart is breaking for the lost sheep of this house, Lord, do a work in us, mighty God, this night and through these days, Lord, that we might more perfectly reflect your glory and bring the light of Yeshua HaMashiach into the households of this city, Lord God, and in our land. Bless now the words which you have given your servant to speak.

Give us deep and attentive hearts to receive and to do and to be the people of the living God. Oh, thank you and praise you, mighty God, for this convocation, for this arrangement, for your wonderful holy presence in Yeshua's great name and all God's people said amen. The topic of this year's conference was born out of the experience of the first night of Shekinah 74.

There was no question that God had led us to establish a conference. He gave us its name, He gave us the location, and He gave us the date. We fully expected for the Shekinah glory of God to fall.

So expectant were we that there was not one of us who came prepared with a message. I didn't think that they would be speaking. I expected only numbers of our Orthodox kinsmen and others whom the Lord would bring would fall on their faces before the mighty falling out of the glory of God in this place.

Instead, on that first night, there was quite another kind of falling out on faces. When the call came at the conclusion of that first message, for the fornicators, for the liars, for the carnal sinners, and there was a bursting as in a dam, and people came spilling out into the aiseways and across the floor and in front of this platform in sobbings and chokings and splutterings and breakings that left us all devastated. It was a revelation, not of the Shekinah glory of God which we had hoped to see, but the reason perhaps why it must still be withheld from us.

Sin in the camp. God branded our hearts and made us to understand the condition of many of our Jewish believers, and especially those in the New York City area, and gave us the theme this year, the shaping of godly character or into the image of God. I've been seeking the face of the Lord for some word from him to express the burden which is of his heart, and I believe that I have it, and I couldn't help but notice coming in again to New York from New Jersey today, though I am a New Yorker, though my formative years were spent here, though I know its streets and its atmosphere and its spirit well, it never fails to stun me to come again into New York City.

I don't know if you have that reaction coming today. The great Babylon, the noise, the confusion, the grinding attrition which is written even into the cars that are piled one behind the other, lined by the curbs. I don't know of another city where you've seen more rust, more dents, more breaks and damages of cars having been smacked together as a symbolic expression and statement of the effect on lives lived in this city as in New York.

It's the leader of every statistic in the cities across the nation and in the world on drugs, crime, rape, corruption, murder, and ironically it is also the leader in the setting of styles. It's the TV capital of the world.

It's the Jewish crossroad of the world, and I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that for the two and a half million Jewish people who are in New York City, that the more effectual Jerusalem of the world in terms of its culture, its mentality, its spirit, its mode of life, its thought has its origin here, where these meetings are taking place.

There's a lifestyle which is increasingly being revealed in this city which is fast becoming universal. It's amoral, undisciplined, mindless, drifting, pleasure-seeking, needing immediately to be gratified, inconsiderate of others, crude, vulgar, living from others and expecting it as they're due, critical murmurs, laws unto themselves, abusive despoilers of property, indolent avoiders of work, proud disputers full of disregard for human life, without conscience, able to murder even in the name of social justice, and cultivating appetites that cannot be appeased. The simple virtues of patience, honesty, courage, responsibility and kindness, moderation, concern, which even the unbelieving world used to applaud has simply vanished, a victim of the age.

And I can go back in my own memory, living in this city, growing up in Brooklyn, when words were more current than they are now, such as decency, courtesy, respect. And I can remember on innumerable occasions saying to my buddies, I give you my word of honor. Such words are not spoken in this city again in this generation.

Ethics and morality character is fast becoming a luxury which the world cannot afford. The first illumination for me came as an impassioned 16-year-old high school dropout from this city, going overseas as a merchant seaman, right on the heels of World War II, romantic and full of visionary ideals, to find in the cities of Italy, which was our first stop, dogs hanging in butcher shop windows, and lovely middle class girls taking on the entire ship's crew as prostitutes, while the mother did the bookkeeping. I learned then, despite the deep ethical and moral component in my Jewish heart, that luxury, that morality and ethics and culture was a luxury that perhaps we middle class Jews have been able to afford, but which the world quickly disregards when its conditions change.

The whole story in the tenor of the 20th century has been the dehumanization of the human race. And how ironic is it that that country, which was the showplace of Western civilization, that gave to it the greatest number of composers and poets and philosophers, great thinkers and writers, became in our own generation the place of the incineration of six million of our own Jewish kinsmen, the dehumanization of Germany. And we saw even in that collapse, the collapse also of nominal Christianity.

And I have myself in recent weeks conversed with German Christians of a kind who lived through the Hitler time, and I said to this dear man, now in his advanced age, I said, what did you do, living in Berlin in the early Hitler years, having, as you say, Jewish friends and business acquaintances, to look out of your apartment window and see young Jewish kids being beaten up by Nazi youth, older men's beards pulled and store windows smashed and swastikas painted? And he looked stunned for a moment, I suppose not many had so directly put such a question to him. And he said, Artie said, what could I do? I looked out the window and I pulled down the shade and I turned away. And what else has that epical experience revealed, which we've not even begun to scratch? The Holocaust.

When that people who pride themselves on their ethics and their morality, their civility and their culture, in order to sustain their own lives, were ready and able and did grovel over the lives of others, Jewish men and women who did anything for their own survival, to steal, to cheat, and even to cart the bodies of their own kinsmen into the ovens that they might remain alive. Oh, dear precious children, if we have not read

the history of our own generation aright, woe is us. There's a collapse of humanity, of ethics, of culture, of Jewish ethical culture, which has been for us our effectual Judaism, and for which we have not needed God.

And who of us who saw the recent four-hour telethon, or should I say a marathon, sponsored by the United Jewish Appeal, I think it was only here in the New York City area a few days ago, did not wince at the display of vulgarity, obscenity, lewdness, all of the horrors of the Catskill-Borscht circuit bawdiness which were trotted out that night in an attempt to obtain millions of dollars for Jewish causes. Four million dollars were obtained, but I believe at a greater cost than the Jewish community realizes. Bad taste, vulgar practices, bathed in saturated and most awful humanistic clichés and slop, and just like Jewish contemporary life itself, devoid of God, pathetic and earmarked for death.

To this catalogue of human failure, to produce and sustain character, we must add all the well-meaning saints as well. Such a one, for example, as Peter, who was full of solicitous concern for the Lord. Let this be far from you, he said to Jesus, when the Lord informed him that it was needful that he go to Jerusalem and there be apprehended and tried and crucified.

And the same Peter, who vehemently affirmed, though all the world deny you, yet will I never deny you, did. In the moment of crisis, children, human sentiment will fail, conscience will turn sickly, resolution will melt. And yet, as we enter the end times, never was there greater need than for godly character.

Satan is cast down into the earth, having much wrath where his time is short, fierce evils, unspeakable filth, cruel temptations, and delusion, strife are flooding the earth as it increasingly becomes a universal Sodom and Gomorrah. Seeing these things, dearly beloved, what manner of men ought we to be in all holy living and godliness? There is an inexorable polarity working in the earth, producing at the end time only two kinds of men, gunk and glory. And in an age of extremity, there shall be no moderate alternative.

If character is what a person is, the sum of his distinctive traits is essential intrinsic nature, the sum of qualities by which one has distinguished his essential peculiarity, then patience, honesty, unfeigned love, sincerity, faithfulness, kindness, courage, and humility are the intrinsic attributes of god. They are his distinctive traits, his essential peculiarity. And you are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power, who is the image of the invisible god, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.

And this is the messianic hope for a despairing age. Christ in us, the hope of glory. Why callest thou me good? Jesus said to a flattering inquirer, there is none good but God.

And I'll tell you, dear children, that as I proceed on in this life, I'm seeing the miracle of being conformed to his image, being brought in my own life and nature. Not long ago in the city of Minneapolis, I was invited to be a house guest of a Jewish family whose son I had married the previous spring. They looked at me at that time as if I were some kind of Jewish Elmer Gantry, with great suspicion and reservation as if I were some huckster making a buck doing some kind of new thing.

At that wedding ceremony, and I'll tell you, I'd never been so nervous, by the inspiration of God, I asked the father to make me a star of David, who was a cabinet maker, and he made one in the form of strips of wood, painted one triangle blue and one white, and interspersed the one into the other. And God that night spoke to an Irish and Jewish audience, because the Jewish son was marrying an Irish-believing girl, the mystery of the body of Christ. The two triangles interlocked.

The mystery of the Godhead, the humanity of Jesus and the deity of God. And eyes began to blink open. Six months later, I was invited to be the house guest of these precious people, and I stayed in their basement that night.

Woke the next morning and came up for breakfast. It was a Sunday morning, thinking to myself, Lord, shouldn't I have a service to go to? Shouldn't you be redeeming the time? No commitment. We sat down for breakfast at 8 o'clock and did not get up until 12.

You can't believe the torrent of questions. But Art, why didn't the rabbis tell us? And I would try to explain. But Art, if it says that in the scripture, then how about this? And I would answer, it is written.

Then how about this? It is written. How about this? It is written. At 12 o'clock, they had one last question with stricken faces and trembling voices.

Art, what shall we do? I said, go upstairs, put your bathing suit on and turn on the bathtub. I'll be right up. Like two precious lambs, they went.

And I'll tell you, children, I don't have the words to describe the scene in that bathroom of a precious couple with their middle age spread, one by one, going into the bathtub in such solemnity and holiness, with a weeping son and daughter-in-law standing in the doorway. And when they were dried and dressed, they came down and they took communion with us and went that night to a service. And the father got out of the car and he said, Art, he said, I know something has happened.

I feel different. Why am I telling you this? Because after it was over that day and we were waiting for them to come down, the precious Jewish son and the daughter-in-law said to me over and over again, but Art, you were so patient. But Art, you were so patient.

But Art, you were so patient. And I looked at them with like stunned amazement at what they were saying. I had no consciousness whatever that I had been patient.

And then I recalled that the mother had a history of emotional and mental disturbance and she kept wandering from the subject and they had to bring her back again and again and again. And the father was evasive and tried to flee and had to bring him to the point again and again and again. And finally it sank in that indeed there was a patience that had exuded from my life for four hours for which I was not even conscious.

Now there are people sitting in this room tonight, including my own brother in the flesh and Moshe Rosen if he's still here, and others who have known me through the years who would say Art, whatever attributes you had, patience was not one of them. Children, there's a God who is conforming us into his precious and holy image and the end thereof is the salvation of our people. Paul cried for his little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.

And there is a travail, a painful denial of what you think, you feel, you want if this Christ is to be so formed. Every time you defer to him he is being formed and every time you defer to yourself he is being displaced. Every act is significant in either dulling his image or being made perfect in him.

You say Art, how far are you willing to carry this infinitely? Now I'll give you a for instance that God had brought to my attention that you would think the most innocuous and inconspicuous thing. In a midwestern city we were invited to go out for breakfast at a small restaurant nearby with about eight believing friends

whom I've known through the years. We had a lovely time of fellowship and the check for the meal was put on the table, one check, and any one of us might rightfully have picked up that check and paid it.

But a woman who sat to my left picked it up and I turned to her and I didn't even realize what I was saying or what God was beginning to unfold to my understanding. I said, Sister, did God ask you to do that? Why yes, she said, smiling face, and she thought that would be the end of my question and then I pressed her again. I said, did God really ask you to do that? Oh yes, and she began to titter and giggle nervously and I asked her one last time and then she had to admit, well, no, but she thought it would be a good thing if she picked up the check.

Now listen, dear children, there are a lot of good things that the world will applaud. Oodles and oodles of good things. Like, Lord, let this be far from you.

The world would have honored with Bene Brith plaques and university degrees, but Jesus said, get thee behind me, Satan. Thou art an offense unto me for you savor of the things which be of men and not of God. Precious children, into His holy image means always His will and not ours.

However good, however reasonable, however ethical, however cultural, however applauded by the world. If He be not the author of that act, stop. I'll tell you, by doing a lot of quote and unquote good things like that, although it's good in the moment, it is a step in a moment of ultimate crisis when you shall have no alternative but to draw the shade and to walk away.

Day by day and act by act and moment by moment, we are either walking by the flesh or by the Spirit. And there are a lot of fleshly things which the world will applaud as virtue, but I'll tell you that in the moment of crisis, if you have not been habituated to responding by the Spirit of God, you shall have no alternative but to draw the shade on a dying mankind and walk away. Every act is significant in God if you are to be conformed into His image.

In Adam, all die, but in Christ, all shall be made alive. And I'll tell you that even as believers, Spirit-filled believers, there are individual moments when we can choose to be in Adam rather than in Christ. It wasn't long ago that I attended another Messianic conference with which I wasn't altogether thrilled, and some of the brothers came to me to ask me, what was the cause of my consternation? I said, dear brothers, I don't know how to explain it, but there's an uncanny reaction with me that when I come into a religious environment that ostensibly is supposed to be of God and what is going forth is mental or cerebral, my head hurts, and my head has been hurting incessantly since my arrival.

Oh well, Art, they said, how about this guy who spoke today? He's one of you, like you, he's a tongue speaker, he's had a baptism in the Holy Spirit. You mean you didn't enjoy his presentation? I said, I can't believe that that man who gave that presentation is a Spirit-filled believer. Yes, Art, we know it for a fact.

And then all of a sudden it occurred to me, you can have 100 baptisms in the Spirit, and you can speak with tongues more than them all, but in the moment of crisis, in the moment of commitment, in the moment of ministry and service, in which son are you abiding? The first or the second Adam? They said, well, Art, I said, well listen, how come then if this guy is a charismatic believer that he makes all kinds of schticklach and jokes and cute little things and he's very winsome and personable and he does all kinds of things like that with his presentation? Oh Art, well he's nervous, they explained to me, and he needs to do things like that because he feels that he can't hold his audience otherwise. I said, well you've explained it all. In Adam all die, but in Christ shall all be made alive.

And I'll tell you that you can take two identical acts, like picking up a check from a table, and one can have its origin in hell, and the other can have its origin in heaven, and to the undiscerning eye, you can't see the difference between the two. There's more children to picking up checks from a table than meets the natural eye, if we're to be shaped into the image of God. You want to know something? I don't believe that there was ever anything that issued from the life of Yeshua HaMashiach that was ever haphazard, casual, natural, human, doing his will, his thing, his impulse.

He said, I always do that which pleaseth the Father. And I'll tell you that in the pursuit of pleasing the Father, you can count on it, you're often going to displease men. And don't be too offended if many of them shall be Christian.

Will not the same God, who giveth wisdom liberally and abradeth not, give also courage, patience, character, all. Peter says, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and virtue. I said to a precious Jewish brothers, we left my room to come down to this meeting tonight.

I said, I don't understand what it is. It's such a paradox. Because I go on with God, and the deeper my insight, the more simple the messages seem to become, the less bombast.

And it seems that it just completely goes over the heads and the hearts of the audience, and they look when it's finished up to say, well, what did he say? And I said, my cry is that in hearing the word of God again, we might hear it anew and afresh, and it might really powerfully penetrate our hearts. Now dear children, put on your seat belts. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.

Now wouldn't it be an embarrassment if God were to invoke a convocation of this kind and give us the theme, and allow me in my fanciful imagination to think of all of the exciting things I can say, to whip up the children of God, to become resourceful and disciplined, and devoted and consecrated, and all the kinds of things that usually elicit saccharine tears and broken displays at the altar, and then to find out that that's not God's way at all. We don't need to be flagellated with new invitations to do this or be this, or be more earnest or more disciplined, but only to make him, in whom we are complete, the life of our life. Christ is my character children, or increasingly becoming so.

And I don't believe that if he were a contemporary, he would drop his clothing on his floor, leave his room as a mess and come out as some impeccable charismatic speaker, do sloppy assignments in school, cut corners and get by, be insincere, or any of the numerous things that characterize the lives of believers today. There's an impeccable character in that second Adam, the son of the living God, which God wants to invest and reveal through us, every bit as much as he revealed the glory of the Father. And of all of the salvations for which God has used my life, and I've given up counting, I think the most precious is one that came in Denmark, and it had not one whit to do with my speaking.

Some of Inger's family came to that meeting, I'll never forget it, and what a horror that meeting was. Trying to labor through an interpreter. And he was fouled up and I was, we left that night, I said to her, what was it that I said that so impressed you to open your understanding and heart to the living God? Oh, she said it was nothing in your message.

But I remembered when you lived in Denmark with Inger a few years ago, and I saw the condition of your marriage and life then, and I see you now, and I know there's a living God. Why is it wrong, children, to act

from the dictates of conscience? Isn't that an interesting question for a Jew to propound before a largely Jewish audience, most of whom and all of us perhaps schooled in that ethical and moral concern with which we seem to be born? Why isn't that the way of the world, to act from the dictates of conscience? Isn't that what the world celebrates and acknowledges and honors? I'll tell you why it's wrong. Jesus said, I always do that which pleases my Father.

So ought we to do also. Not only for His will when it is understandable and reasonable, though difficult, but even when it is beyond our understanding. For if we make obedience contingent upon our understanding, we limit God by the limit of our own intellect.

More than that, we have established the mind as the center of life, and we've fallen right into Satan's snare. It's a filthy game. Approving or rejecting the desires of God by the exercise of our intellect, which makes us more high than the most high.

There's a reason, children, why we cannot continue to operate by the dictates of conscience. And what more pathetic thing to consider than those of us who have called into the glory of God to reflect His image, to live by that better covenant and calling ourselves New Testament believers and living as Old Testament Judaistic lives, wrestling with our minds, trying to discern, is this right or is this wrong? Though we be 99% in agreement with God, because He is, of course, eminently reasonable, yet the basis for all our decisions is wrong, though it result in seeming compliance. If you're only agreeing with God because His request or desire for your life is amenable to your intellect, you've blown it.

You're on a wrong foundation, and you've not enjoyed the place to which God has brought you. We have been all along strengthening and building up the self, habituating ourselves to act out of our own narrow humanity rather than by the Spirit. Therefore, in crisis moments when the stakes are great, we are too infantile and undeveloped in the Spirit to discern and respond by it.

In a word, we pull down the shade and walk away. Christ has not been formed in us. This principle is equally true in issues of character.

If we habitually respond in terms of our own disposition, toward kindness, toward sentiment, toward moral rectitude, toward social norms, toward conventional decency, we may be approved of men, but we have grievously failed God. If you are still talking about what you are doing for God, trying to be good, what you think is right, you have likely missed it. And how many of us, like Peter, though saved, therefore are not yet converted.

When you are converted, Jesus said, strengthen the brethren. What a picture of the religious hotshot. Yea, though all the world deny you, yet will I never deny you.

Let this be far from you, Lord, statements that redound in great moral vigor. And the end was a broken shambles of a man. And others who agreed with him, yea, thus said they all, fled and left him, and one of them naked.

Let's not live Old Testament, ethical, Judaic lives when God has called us to be the children of the New Covenant. God has given us exceedingly great promises, precious promises that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature. And I think there are some translations that say the divine character.

And I'm willing to suggest tonight, children, that perhaps the last, most deadly and subtle snare of all, which has taken us unawares, is even our concern for our own spirituality and the shaping of our own

character, as if this were something to be done by the result of our own exertion and striving, independent of the character which is already in Christ Jesus. We ought to be partakers of the divine nature. God help us to put aside our own moral sensibilities, and what we think is right, like picking up the check that he might have full sway through us for the thing which is perfect and holy.

Partakers of the divine nature having escaped, it says, the corruption that is in the world through lust. You know the scripture that we often quote, he who hath the son hath life? Do you believe that tonight? And I ask you children, is there a word more inclusive than the word life? What shall we omit that is not comprehended in the life of the son of God? All the things that pertain to life and to godliness was made manifest in him. All the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in him, and he who hath the son hath life and hath therefore character.

It says in 1 John 4.9, this is the love of God toward us, in our moral predicaments striving to be good, and if you read Ben Israel, and it's only a picture of many Jewish lives, a man broken over the issue of trying to establish his own manhood, his own virtue, failing. This is the love of God toward us, that he hath given us his only begotten son, that we should live in him. Through him.

Live, that means picking up checks from tables, that means being gracious, sociable, that means being infinitely patient, that means whatever God chooses to express in any given moment by the obedience of our lives. Truly there is but one that is good, and that is God. True messianic Jewishness is nothing but the continual dependence upon God, and God through the Messiah for all of life.

All goodness comes from God as surely as all life comes from God. If the man Christ Jesus said, I can of myself do nothing, how much more is that true for us? Oh precious children, there's a sweet spirited God hovering over this convocation this night. His heart is bursting when he looks beyond the walls of this building and this university, he need not go far to see the condition of our kinsmen in this city, and the world in general, living a condition of life for which we have largely been the architects and the purveyors, the pornographers and the writers.

There's a light that God wants to break forth into a dark earth, and it's got to come out of the faces and speech and acts of his people. I've put aside trying to be moral and ethical, I want only Christ to be formed in me. I'm going to ask you to bow your head.

Many of us are so weary from conferences and meetings we could barely abide another, and I tell you with all my heart and my colleagues who were together with me last year when God by his spirit gave us the name of this conference, gave us the location, he said, plant my banner in the very place where the student rebellions broke out, where other Jewish sons of mine who know me not urinated and defecated in the university president's office, and made a mock and a travesty of an institution designed for the quote and unquote humanities. Where Satan raged, I'm going to bring my Shekinah glory. It's not enough to be a nice guy.

It's not enough to be a well-meaning believer. It's not enough to be slapped on the back and applauded for picking up a check. It's only enough to be obedient sons who reveal the glory of God the Father being made conformed to his image.

Precious God, in the name of the Holy One of Israel, the impeccable and perfect obedient son who always pleased the Father, we pray your great mercies upon us, Lord, who have striven with our consciousness and our minds and exertion in sweaty exercises to be impressive and formidable and to show forth, Lord

God, the glories of your kingdom, quick to quote scriptures and to recite spiritual laws and to do the other kinds of abracadabra which avails little. Mighty God, help us to be kept from ourselves. Teach us by your spirit that there is no such thing as an insignificant act.

Be shaped in us, in our thought, in our speech, in our deeds. May we walk in these days with a holy hush, knowing that you've called us to a holy convocation, not only that we shall be informed but also that we shall be shaped, that we might leave this place to go into the places in the world to which you've called us in the revelation of your glory. Purge, cleanse, impart your life.

Keep us from our own foolish prattle. Be the speaking of our speaking and the doing of our doing. And thank you for the glory, mighty God, that somehow through that all it still comes out sounding like us with Brooklyn and Bronx accents.

Bless these children and take these simple words and impart them to their hearts, that together as well as individually we might reveal the image of the living God. In Yeshua's holy name we pray. Amen.

Let's just quietly rest in God for a moment. Let's savor the spirit of God. Let's not fritter the word away or dissipate it.

Let that word just sweetly penetrate, move through your spirit. Let the Lord bring to your understanding instances where you've picked up the check too quick, more concerned to elicit the applause of men than to honor God. Let God himself conclude what he has himself initiated as we wait quietly and sweetly upon him.

Perhaps there's someone in this audience tonight who has come here out of curiosity or cynicism or some idle motive or brought by friends or whatever. There's a God who has spoken to your heart that what is represented here tonight is not just another religious alternative to the state forms of Judaism, but altogether a radical and new mode of life in God. If you want to taste and to receive that life, I invite you right now just to come out of your seat and stand by this platform that we might pray together that you might pass from death, striving, exertion, sweating, misspent activity, broken caricatured living, failure and frustration and defeat into the triumphant life of God.

Is there one in this audience tonight hearing this music and hearing what has been performed on this platform tonight, sensing the presence of God, who will not want to leave the precincts of death and enter into life this night by the act of your own will and choice, and this is the heart of your moral character right now. Eleven years ago, almost to the date, what is today, May 23rd? On May 26th in Jerusalem, as a matter of fact, it was probably this very day that I walked into a bookstore in Jerusalem, utterly confused and bewildered as a Jewish intellectual, seeking for philosophical answers to my distraught life for a man who had such an ethical bias and could not be it. Lost and found myself in a bookstore which sold Bibles and New Testaments, adjoining a chapel to find that this was a congregation of Pentecostal Jews, hearing the still small voice of a God of whom I knew not, calling me by name, commanding me to remain.

I remained for four days and nights, and that last night was so whacked out of my skull, so perplexed, so confused, so bewildered, unable by the power of my intellect to reconcile all the New Testaments. Couldn't understand that icky gospel, so fundamentalist sounding about sin and salvation. And in my sleep, powerless to affect my salvation, God brought understanding into my heart.

And the next morning I woke with a peace and a calm that I had never experienced in all my years of travail and anguish, and said to the precious Jewish woman who was ministering to me, Rina, I believe I understand. And I'll tell you children, I didn't understand all, but I understood enough. I didn't understand virgin birth, and I didn't understand triune God, and I don't think that I can say tonight that I understand yet.

Even Paul spoke about the mystery of the Godhead. But I understood that there was a living God, and a resurrected Christ in whom was all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, inviting me to be made one with him, to lay aside my threadbare and pathetic life, and be entered in to his glory. You understand enough to make a decision tonight that'll pass you from death to life.

Is there one here, I'm not going to repeat this. Is there a believer here, more than one, whose heart is strangely pounding, and needs some kind of physical expression of commitment for something that God has spoken to you through the spirit tonight? Showed you that though you call yourself a New Testament believer, you're living a tawdry and almost deceitful, old covenant Judaistic life, full of moral concern, full of striving, full of trying to impress, even doing for God, and altogether getting in his way. Maybe there needs to be from you some expression of repentance, some kneeling before God, and seeking his face.

I invite you to come out of your seat, and to stand by this altar. I'm going...

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