

K-049 Weakness

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of weakness and foolishness in revealing God's power and the need for the church to reject the emphasis on power and ability.

Duration: 56:51

Scripture: Isaiah 53:7, Matthew 26:39, Matthew 27:12-14, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:26, 2 Corinthians 4:7

Topics: "Weakness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses his weakness and inability to fully prepare for the message he is about to deliver. He emphasizes the importance of being open vessels for God's word to flow through, rather than relying on personal preparation. The speaker also discusses the concept of captivity and how it can be seen as a positive thing, bringing a measure of profound disappointment to those who are overly confident. He concludes by highlighting the contrast between the powerlessness of Jesus before the powers of the world and the new age of love and spirit power.

Transcript

So, feeling characteristically flushed with fever, weak, I really am curious to see what the Lord will bring forth. Something is really percolating in my spirit, and I'm appreciating an opportunity to hear it unfold. I think it's going to take all of the four days.

Whether it was circumstantial or not, I don't know, but we started by plane and ended by bus, and coming up today because of the weather. And it gave me the opportunity to read something on the bus that has been lying about since the fall of 1980, and was just the right thing for where my spirit presently is. So you'll be hearing about that in a minute.

In what form? I don't know, but I want to pray now. Thank you, precious God. I'm as desirous, my God, of hearing that now word as any soul in this room.

And I know that you have not turned a deaf ear to the cry and the petition of these saints. Come and unfold your great heart before us in these days. Open our understanding, precious God.

I don't have to apologize before you, my God, for what I am or my condition or any such thing. You know it. I just ask your great mercy, Lord, that somehow delights in choosing foolish things out of which to bring that which is holy.

Do it, we pray, my God. Bless this time. Such speaking must be significant.

We want to hear it, my God, and be gracious to us, Lord. And we thank you for this occasion, which we ask you to take completely unto yourself and to use for your glory. In Jesus' holy name, amen.

Amen. Well, I guess the single word that is dearest in my heart right now is weakness. And to it I would probably add foolishness, failure, and every other uncomely word that is an offense in the world and a delight to God.

I'm starting like a fool, and of necessity it must be so. What's on my heart must be spoken out of foolishness and out of weakness because it's what God wants to rub into our consciousness. Something is just growing inside an awareness that the way of the kingdom is so contrary to the way of the world, and I've been so offended of late, more so than ever, by anything that is brash, anything that is bumptious, that throws its weight around, that is knowledgeable and informed and sticks its fingers in its belt.

And any of that kind of cocksure posture is just rubbing me raw in these days. I feel like declaring war on Pentecostal amens, on lusty choruses, on anything that's even loud, that's prideful or presumes to know anything, and I almost just want to be utterly foolish and celebrate failure. I want to celebrate messes.

I want to celebrate confusion. I want to celebrate everything that characterizes what I believe is the true work of God and which offends us who are in it, for which we rub our chins and scratch our heads and wonder what's wrong, and why haven't we shaped up, and why aren't we more the marvel that we ought to be and the example and illustration and wing-ding demonstration that would really compel the attention of the world. In my subversive way, I kind of like that we creak.

One of the great delights of this season was the Lord opening to me a text, which I don't plan to use now, but you can look at it for your own edification, about the band that joined David in the cave at Adullam. I think there were 400, and they're described as in-depth and discontent, and there was one other kind of negative description, but I like that. All of a sudden it made me understand Ben-Hadrah Ministries, and as I reviewed those who came to us, even those who came to us auspiciously.

Once in a while there's a rare one who comes with some kind of substance, who had been in business and dissolved his home and business and yet has something to bring. Of course, we never know what it is, and we never ask and we never insist, but I have a sneaky suspicion that by the time they come, after they've paid every last bill and cleaned up their worldly affairs, what they come with is a shirt on their back and their toolbox and a vehicle that's going to break down about a week later and they themselves about them. I've often wondered about why that's so, and now I'm persuaded that it must be such.

So persuaded that I'm suspicious that if anything starts auspiciously more impressively, if it's well-funded and it runs smoothly and has a brilliant building program and a spanky other kinds of program and produces shiny disciples, I'm suspicious that that's not of God. It smacks of man. It has a taint and a stink to it because it's too efficient.

It works too well. It's too smooth. It's too calmly.

It's too attractive. It's been accomplished without suffering. Something is grievously.

So for the want of a text to hang all this on, and I'm not any kind of a biblical commentator, on the Greyhound bus, I was reminded of that text in Jeremiah 48 about Moab, who has been at ease from his

youth and he hath settled on his leave and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity, therefore his taste remains in him and his scent... One day I'll have the privilege of hearing a real teacher really burrow into this and give us all of the depth of meaning that it contains. All I'm wanting now is just a kind of a springboard because the thing that strikes me is the scent or the stink or the taint of man that manifests itself in anything in which man still has his self-assurance and his self-assertiveness. I came across... I'll probably read it sometime in the course of these days.

In fact, I'll probably do a lot of reading. I've got something to read from here for you tonight. A statement by Karl Bach.

I'll paraphrase. I wish that I had it with me. In which he says that it's not until you're saved and not until you get into the church that you really begin to learn, glimpse and understand the dimensions of human depravity.

Isn't that astounding? You thought that after you were saved you were finished with your humanity but the revelation of what we really are as men begins at that point. That's why the church, real church, is such a horror, such a mess, so ungainly, so full of confusion and contradiction, such an ugly revelation of the condition of men and your own condition. And if that has not been revealed in your church conduct, it's not church.

It's something less. Something spanky, something neat that keeps the lid on and just allows you that much activity to give you the semblance of services and the euphoria of meetings and songs and a good preaching and things like that but not sufficient to reveal what you are and what we all are together. That's why great grace is not yet upon us all because it's reserved for wretches.

And until we have come to recognize how wretched we are, how totally bankrupt, how totally incapable of anything, a bunch of functionary hot-air specialists who think they know, full of flash and so much in the spirit of the world. It's kind of distinctive animation and character that, except that they employ a Christian vocabulary, it's exactly the same ethos and spirit as a refrigerator salesman. Same kind of braggadocio, the same kind of boastfulness.

It has the scent and the stink of man. And it's just getting to me. I think it's getting to God.

And it begins with our youth. And I don't know what to do about it. Moab had been at ease from his youth.

So something needs to begin early. And I've already prayed to the Lord to restrain me from not cutting up the young saints. I'm just itching to flay flesh from bones and just to dig in.

And every place where I see this bunch of this just to tear through. But I'm asking for divine restraint. And yet I see that this is so characteristic of youth.

Maybe it takes a certain number of years of banging about, of seeing your cherished ideals fail, of seeing the terrible contradiction of all that you had hoped, that youth cannot possibly understand because they've not had the time required to experience that kind of human disappointment by which God becomes God. So here's a whole issue of a little publication devoted to weakness and to foolishness and to remarkable statements that will compel my attention throughout this entire bus ride. Contrary to the stack of other publications that have heaped up by my bed, that come from prolific ministries all over the place that are jamming our mailboxes full.

And I try beautifully at least to scratch through some of that stuff and get a little understanding of what they're saying and where they are. And it's like blah. It's like sugar spun candy.

It's tasteless. It's impotent. It's lifeless.

It's inert. And I don't know why because the words are correct. It's saying all the right things.

Talks about the cross and discipleship and commitment and other kinds of things to which we nod amen. And yet it's the worst kind of blah. What is it that makes this so powerfully compelling and the other so bland? And I think that the answer is that in one the sense of man is still there and in the other it has been vanquished and overcome.

Even the talk about being overcomers which I know is yet true is waiting upon our first being overcome. That that deep, secret, hidden thing in our innermost being from which that scent, that man smell emanates has really been ruthlessly dealt with. That's the difference between the author of something that is bland and the one which is compelling.

And the same is true also in speaking, preaching, teaching, witnessing and all the rest. By and large I would have to say even our most impressive Christianity corrects the bland. And so reading again from Karl Bach who is quoted in this little issue he writes about a certain ultimate, mighty secret line of defense in man is as yet unbroken.

And it is not even broken within that realm which we call Christianity. All our churches and chapels without exception are situated outside the zone of this inner fortress. Even outside this last bastille behind which the eye of man has his last and strongest position.

And this is the reason why practically all that is thought, spoken or heard about God and his redemption within the churches and chapels earnest and zealous as it may be is always so remarkably impotent. That is our religion, our morality, our ethics. Practically all our disciplines of thought make this their premise.

It is the heathen, worldly and churchly Christian philosophies of life are interchangeable and similar. The mode of expression may not be the same but the goal, the purpose is the same. Man, the human who will not allow himself to be conquered.

Man who seeks himself and desires to assert himself. That's the thing. That's the sense.

And it's in Christianity. It's in the church. The spirit of Moab.

And I don't know what it takes to root it out but until it's done, until it's broken, until it's been captured, until it's been overcome, we'll say all the right things and sing all the right things and it'll lack that distinctive penetration that comes when God... Moab has been at ease from his youth, he has settled on his leaves, has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity. Therefore his taste remains in him and his scent is not changed. How many youth do we know, Christian youth, have gone into captivity? I don't even know what that means.

I only have a suspicion. It means something is arrested. Something is restrained or constrained.

Some kind of limitation has been imposed. Some kind of yoke has been put on. Something is stopping a youth from expressing his sack and mixing it up into divine things.

He's come under a restraint that stops him in his tracks in all of his youthful impetuosity. How many guys here would say that they know that in their experience, that they have experienced this kind of captivity? How many would even say that they welcome it? It's been my observation that one of the reasons why the Church is sick and so not only bland and impotent, just a kind of churchy, institutional, cultural thing is that so little is required of God and those who lead them are so fearful to require anything of Him. We've just come through some heavy discussions in our own community about decisions pertaining to our future and should we undertake this, that, or the other.

And it almost has to be approached like walking on eggshells, lest you injure sensitive spirits or seem to come on hard or impose your will or give any such appearance. We've been so sensitized that we lean backward lest we convey some kind of notion that we're being imperious or demanding or anything really shall be required if you don't agree. I think as Shakespeare said something about human all to human and probably we can say American all to American.

I've got my rights. So we don't know what this captivity means and we need to know. I like the way this is rendered in the American standard.

Mo has been at ease since his youth. He has also been undisturbed on his leave. And I want to vote for disturbance.

I want to vote for agitation. I want to vote for confrontation and all the kinds of things that are necessary to get us off our leaves. I guess the modern day translation would be off our dust, off our, I don't know what, things that we establish for our satisfaction and delight, even religiously.

Just to be poured off, poured out in the things that are inconvenient and contrary to our willingness. It's a process of leaving from vessel to vessel, emptied. How many of you guys would like to look after the kinds of glowing references and his tapes and sit there and hear that and feel as I feel completely weak, not able to prepare because this kind of subject can, because to be prepared in a certain sense contradicts the weakness in which weakness must be expressed.

And just to come up with your two Bibles, a little passage mark, some of the things you've been reading on the bus and hoping and trusting that this is somehow it's the burden in your spirit and how it's going to come out, you don't know. And maybe what is necessary more than any message is to bring a measure of profound disappointment to young hotshots who look up at me with a kind of romantic beguilement. You know why? They want to be just like that.

They also want to one day to be center stage and be mighty in the word and whatever else they think that men like myself represent. And what the Lord has got to show them is colossal and stupefying failure. Something utterly dismal and terribly disappointing.

And in fact, I thank God for the minimal grace that's allowed me even to quote this much Scripture. I don't have anything more. And I was just perfectly prepared to read several other writers.

What do you think of that? And hear you murmuring inside saying, hey, can't he express his own thoughts? Does he have to quote from Karl Barth? I just want to tell you, Karl Barth says it a thousand times better than I ever can. You know why? Because God made him so. And because he made me less.

And I have got to accept the less that God has made of me. And recognize that I could not possibly paraphrase or seek to express and come to the same kind of clarity and definition and power that this

godly man has. And to believe that it's more important that you should hear him if that's what God wants quickly than you should hear me.

I mean, who could paraphrase this? There is a place within us which is situated beyond all these differences, beyond good and evil, beyond piety and impiety. In this place at its deepest, the most hidden, the most inward part in us, an ultimate battlefield, so to speak, an unconquerable citadel, a mighty fortress lifts its walls. That is the throne of the human in us.

How does a man know that? I think that the greatest man of God, I think of one in particular, who so captivates me is a man who has spent time in a mental institution. And I hear that there's a second like him who was an eminently successful Baptist pastor in England. And somehow in the midst of his great success and great personality and ability, there was a complete collapse.

And how long that man languished in that condition, I don't know. But the Lord has restored him to ministry and yet it's of another kind. Same thing of this other American brother.

Something in the voice of that first one, the raspy voice that bespeaks a glimpse of what is at the heart of our humanity. A man who had learned of the Moab in himself. Horrified and shocked because it probably contradicted all of his principles and understanding.

Found out what an unspeakable rat he was even while he was eloquently professing the truth of God. And finally the contradiction got him. Something like that.

So I just want to make a case for weakness and for foolishness. And for all of the things that I think that are needful to be experienced that somehow are inherent in the faith. That are the key to the revelation of God.

It's not by us doing everything right. I think somehow, maybe I'm going to ask if this paper might be circulated. But I have a sense that somehow we're going to be required first to do everything.

We're going to be required to walk into walls and to enter each other. And see the collapse and contradiction of our hopes and all of these things before we'll finally come to a kind of true ground by which God can be Lord of all. He's not yet in that place so long as there's a human swagger.

A human assurance. A learning how to do it. That is able to emulate and imitate and successfully conduct and perform religious things.

I think that the spirit of the world has really well, unquestionably affected this whole emphasis on power and ability. And that we can do it as well as the world if not better. We can take its techniques and use them for the kingdom of God.

And we can be just as personable and just as charming just as musical and just as able. And by that build churches build movements, build organizations. And they're successful.

Somehow that's what's rubbing me the wrong way. Another writer of the same issue says our age has swallowed the dogma that the strong shall prevail over the weak and may the best man win. Our age has become intoxicated with power.

Electric power, atomic power, military power, brute power. People are looking for their salvation in power terms. Even powerful man of God.

Powerful preacher. How about weak preacher? Paul who said that my presence among you was pathetically weak. People are looking for their salvation in power terms.

If students want to participate they call for student power. If blacks seek freedom they cry for black power. Maybe we'll be hearing soon church power.

And I'll tell you one of the things that is indigestible and in my gut is the power being expressed by the natural Israel in their Lebanon situation. What is it called? The emancipation of Galilee or some other euphoric title? When it seems to me what it is is a tremendous display of power. A gargantuan demonstration.

It's bringing up a great howitzer to swat a fly. And what I'm amazed at is the universal celebration of this demonstration by all of Christendom. That somehow it doesn't bother us.

It doesn't contradict our principles. We have such a love relationship with Israel that whatever they do and however they do it, we somehow applaud it. That if they were stung by a nettlesome bee or a wasp that occasionally comes over their borders or sends a rocket that somehow there is a justification for the unleashing of this massive power to extricate and to remove once and for all this irritant.

And we celebrate their success. What I wanted to suggest that in that is a statement that we have been seduced by an emphasis in the world that celebrates power. That we really are probably deeply ashamed and self-conscious about weakness.

And we would not want to share the Lord. We would not want to take the risks of foolishness. We would always want to come out smelling like a rose and doing something expertly and well on the basis of our own ability rather than to trust the life of the crucified and the risen one to somehow not by might nor by power but by His Spirit to triumph.

And I know that even as we quote that scripture, not by might, not by power, but by my spirit, say the Lord. We're saying the spirit of power. How about the spirit of weakness? How about the spirit of humiliation? How about the spirit of abject failure that was demonstrated on the cross? With that lump of bedraggled humanity hanging there before crestfallen and dejected fearful disciples whom He had colossally failed.

The church has been too long one of the power monstrosities in the world. Can you see why this is more compelling than the other stuff that's alongside? It's so impolite. It's absolutely crude.

It spits out. Is not the sickness of the church that it has lived by power and now indulges in nostalgic homesickness for the power of yesteryear? Isn't that what our craven and carnal souls are hankering for when we talk about Pentecost and the glory of God that fell? We want to see the power sound so spiritual but in that is the stink of Moab. Our motive stinks.

We want to exhibit ourselves clothed in that power, doing great things. It has not wanted to look the part of the idiot in the eyes of the power brokers of the world. The church has said to Caesar, if you can do it, we can do it too.

So they raised up a pope with absolute power with keys to enter the smoke-filled rooms of the secular power systems. Thus the church has dealt with worldly power by matching it with her own ecclesiastical power. It is the power of Caiaphas and Annas and the chief priests who stand by accusing Jesus of blasphemy and religious heresy.

Well, I don't have a TV set anymore but occasionally I catch a glimpse in travels of some of the more popular evangelists and what I see is swagger. What I see is human personality. A demonstration of things that people find so beguiling and attractive and it stinks.

Something about the microphone being held by a hand with a pinky. I don't know, I don't want to sound like a legalistic jerk in making the whole thing out of a ring but it's what you expect of a super salesman. It has that bit of flash.

There's a French phrase I can't pronounce. Joie de vivre. Joie de vivre.

That sap, that spirit of life that we can do it guys, just as well as Christians as they can do it in the world. The contrast is the Jesus before his accusers. The lamb that goes to the slaughter silently.

The groveling and the sweat and the bloodshed. This brother writes the silence of Jesus is the powerlessness of love, the helplessness of God in the world that is ruled by the power monstrosities of the old age. The new age of love power, of spirit power is dawning in the powerlessness of Jesus before the power. There's a scripture in Colossians about making a spectacle, a demonstration in Colossians 2.15 when he had disarmed the rulers and authorities or the powers I think it says in King James.

He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through the cross. But I'm just in a disposition and a mood to think on what basis was that triumph of the worldly powers made? By what power did he triumph over their powers? Because their powers, the combination of a priestly class and Roman rule of everything that is secular and religious power he made an open spoil and a demonstration of those powers by the power of the cross by silence by humiliation by suffering, by abject weakness. He writes this is the time to renounce the power.

It is a time to attack the sphere of the powers by vindicating the mirror of foolishness and the power of not succeeding on the basis of the power of the willingness to be weak. The power that comes not in conventional church circumstances where we're not together long enough or intensively enough to reveal and to show our weakness but to be willing to come into that grit that really takes the mask off and shows us what our real and naked condition is, that it is weak and it is hopeless. It's the willingness to be taken captive and to be restricted and to be poured off emptied from barrel to barrel.

I'm not just talking about worldly or carnal things. I'm talking even about religious and spiritual things. So long as your desire is in them there is still that stink that taint, that smell the scent of man.

You still have your own flavor and that's the difference between an impotent work the powerful thing comes out of the weakness of that which has been emptied and brought into captivity. And the flashy thing which is powerless is the life that is never subdued, never overcome, still retains the man. Still living for itself, still assertive.

Therefore the man who has allowed himself to be overcome is one who makes no demands, has no surety, no rampart upon which he can depend, no wall behind which he can defend himself. He is driven out of every human position without any human support into an exposed spot in the midst of the profound circumstances and enigmas of life. He is hounded about, disturbed, stormed, shaken, humbled, the opposite of an assured man who has an answer for every question.

Probably of all the men I know I come pretty close. Stormed, shaken, without any human support, exposed in the midst of profound circumstances. Lousy father, inadequate husband, faltering elder, inadequate

shepherd, unsure leader.

And I'll tell you what, I prefer it so. I know what you guys are going to say when this is over. Cluck your tongue and not come back tomorrow night and say this guy's a mess and he's got it all wrong.

This is negative. But I just have to express it. I think that there's something here, something that we need to find again or find for a first time that we've never understood because the spirit of Moab is in the church and youthfulness is not just a matter of chronology.

We can be fifty and sixty years old and still have that taint in that spirit. We've never been empty, never. We may be allowed a little to spill out, but not completely because to be completely poured out is to be left defenseless.

It's to be left without recourse. You have no ability, no comeback, no answer. You're just utter foolishness, utter weakness, utter humiliation.

It's the utter thing, that U-T-T-E-R, that ultimate of utter thing in the inmost place that God is. The man who has allowed himself, so I guess it's not automatic. And maybe the more that God seeks to restrain or constrain or break or pull out or empty, the more we bolt, the more we walk, the more we say, get thee behind me Satan, the more we resist and find every reason for it.

Oh, I can document what I'm trying to say by thinking over the years in community how many have fled. And with good reason. This was wrong and that was wrong and this condition was irritating and vexing and this elder lacked that or the conditions were not smooth and functioning and it was not a happy and prospering fellowship, etc.

You know what I think now? I don't think that God intended that it should be at that time. That was the pouring out. That was the opportunity to be rid of the stink.

That was the only condition that could search it out and find it. But because you were so hot shot sure and had such clever notions about what community ought to be and this didn't measure up in your dissatisfaction, in your irritation and in your prospect of attractive things elsewhere, you beat it. I always hate to make absolute statements about community whether it's an option or not.

Because if I say no it's not an option. And that every saint must come into this kind of demanding relationship where no other provision will fit them for the condition that we're going to be required to face in a soon coming hour. That sounds as if we're tooting our horn and yet I believe it's true.

Mere church can never produce humiliation. Mere services and Sunday attendants will never reveal you. You'll never be poured out.

You'll never be tried. In conventional Christian situations, however charismatic, a man who has allowed himself to be open is one who will allow himself to be put in that kind of a situation where he's going to have to face his own stink and see his own failure and that of other saints and have his own gilded picture of romantic notions, of humanistic notions, of even what the faith is broken to pieces and destroyed. Until you're just collapsing a heap and you cannot go on.

And what happened to your vaunted principles and at that point comes the blessed hope. That's where it begins. That's where God becomes God.

That's where his grace becomes grace. That's when he begins to unfold his will and his way and provides the energy and everything that our own... How many of us are willing to go down to that before we can come up? Come down to the human thing before we can come up? No wall behind which he can be... I wish I had the ability to summarize, to give you some sense of what our community discussions have been. Discussion is not the word.

What goes on in those sessions, the things that are said and the different kinds of things that are expressed and the varieties of personality and points of view and vexations and how would you like to live and that kind of percolating thing continually. I think that however inadequate my description, it's more a description of what is normative church than anything that has been understood by that word in the experience of most of us. That's what it means about a man who has allowed himself to be overwhelmed, who makes no demands, has no surety, no ransom upon which he can defend, no wall behind which he can defend himself.

He's driven out of every... Without any human support, it's an exposed spot in the midst of the profound and you don't have wisdom and you don't have an answer and your joy is agape and you're choking and sputtering and gasping just like anybody else. And you're an elder and a leader. He is hounded about, disturbed, stormed, shaken, humbled.

The opposite of an assured man who has an answer for everything. And this article concludes, there comes a time sooner or later when this terrible upheaval and ruin will come to us. You welcome that time? That in order to build the everlasting kingdom there first needs to come a scandalous failure, an upheaval and a collapse.

That somehow you cannot leap over it and build the everlasting kingdom until something first falls away, breaks up. And this no one can escape. Against it no betrayal can avail.

The only question is whether we shall, like Judas, defend ourselves against it to the utmost, only to have to encounter it finally with despair. Oh, that we might see some of the imperceptible light of the resurrection in which the cross stands. That in the midst of our fears we would not fear.

That we might dare to say yes, even against ourselves. I've given some hairy invitations at the conclusion of messages over the years that probably an invitation like this would be the most frightening. That we would dare to say yes, even against ourselves.

Lord, we invite you from tonight on to flush out the moab that rooted out right into the deepest hidden place. That stink of man, that self thing, that assertive thing that wants its way, that hides and insinuates itself even in the religious and spiritual realms and thinks itself godly. That thing that is the flash, the exposure, the flashiness, the bumptiousness, the hot shot, the loud amen, the yes, we've got it, the rah-rah, that moab stink that is robbing the church.

Lord, we welcome that show us our weakness, show us how really, utterly hopeless we are. That's what the church is. It's that thing given of god to reveal what could never have been seen.

Salvation is only the beginning of that revelation and true church is willing for that. Moab has been a decent city which has also been undisturbed. Just the opposite of the spirit world that doesn't want to be disturbed.

It wants it smooth, it wants it efficient, it wants it spanky, smart, clever, right on, rah-rah-rah, send them home empty. Whether it's in the world or business or commerce, it has also been undisturbed. Neither has it been emptied from vessel to vessel nor has it gone into exile is the American standard equivalent for the word gone into captivity.

Have you gone into exile? That's another whole message. But what it means is you're not one of the boys. You're an exile.

You're a stranger even in the midst of the things that are familiar. You stand out conspicuously. You're an offense.

You're so painfully different. You're an agitation that men can't even look upon you. That's how strange you've been made.

An exile. Neither has he been made. He's not been disturbed and he's not been made an exile.

He's one of the boys and he's comfy. And he's brought that same spirit into the religious life that the world celebrates as power. Therefore he retains his flavor.

I guess that's what the fragrance of Christ is. That is waiting to be exuded in the world. That makes manifest the knowledge of him by us in every place.

A savor of life and hope. It's only that that comes out of weakness, out of foolishness, out of failure. Out of being made an exile.

Out of being taken captive. Out of being poured off. Emptied.

From vessel to vessel. Well that's the beginning of what I have to say. It's the first time I've ever heard myself.

It's almost such a desire for that which is contrary to the world that it wants to celebrate everything that the world applauds. And damn. It wants to celebrate everything that the world finds abhorrent.

And damn everything in the world. What is esteemed of men is abominable. There is no at all.

Learning how to establish organization. All in the name of Christ. Not by might.

Not by power. But by my spirit. The spirit of foolishness, abject failure and silence.

That spirit is the spirit that overcomes powers of this world. Which have mounted in such velocity and volume as has never been known before in history. And yet in the face of all that, the final thing is the triumph of weakness as it is made manifest.

Lord I just trust you. I won't even evaluate what I'm hearing out of my own mouth. I'm trusting Lord for the spirit of the speaker.

I understand that it had to be foolish and that it had to be weak. That it couldn't show itself masterful. With great dexterity, trip from one scripture to another and show cunning interpretation and clever arrangement and powerful conclusion.

It just had to be like this. And Lord I ask that you would find this out of your viewers. That you would think of the hot shot that is in us Lord.

The bravado that is in us. The self assurance and the self assertion that you would get into that hidden thing and that deep thing Lord that holds back the fragrance of the knowledge of you all. And is issuing another kind of scent.

A human scent. Even in the holy place. Precious God.

And I pray for the young men especially. From their youth that they might know the captivity of God. I'm not talking about some stupid system of discipleship and submission and authority that's a plastic counterfeit Lord.

I'm talking about a real yoga. I'm talking about men being nailed on the spot. I'm talking about a constraint that makes something well up in them that they want to spit their guts out.

I'm talking about stripping them of their loud amen's. Precious God Lord. I pray from their youth that they will welcome this captivity.

That they will allow themselves to be overcome. Thank you Jesus that you'll raise up men who will reveal the power of God. Which is the weakness and foolishness of God in a world that celebrates power might and suffering.

And that this shall be the triumph at the end of the age as it was in the beginning. Oh my God restore them to the cross. Restore the cross.

The profoundest revelation of our God who didn't answer back his accusers. Who in weakness admitted himself my God it has been lost to us. I don't know that we have ever understood.

We sing about it too happily. We preach about it too effortlessly. It's become just a doctrine.

Help us in thy mercy Lord. Help us because we acknowledge that we're weak. We're impotent.

We're unable. Except you give except you reveal. We cannot be by ourselves or of ourselves.

We want to be emptied and full. Pour us out that you might fill us up with another spirit. And in that triumph over the powers of this age.

Let that spirit my God already seep into the souls of these whom you have collected tonight. And set the tone and prepare our hearts my God for what you shall be pleased to give and continue. We ask my God that it might be a word.

Thank you Jesus. Thank you precious God. For the God that you love.

Thank you Lord for a love which is in powerlessness triumphant. Thank you Jesus. We're willing to be amassed by God.

Willing to come apart at the seams. Willing to lose all of our confidence. Willing to be exposed.

That something enduring and eternal shall be established that shall reveal your glory. Hear these silent amens of the children in this room who say I welcome this. I welcome captivity and to feel my God with

myself.

Rid me of that deeply rooted thing that wants to express itself with your holy words and your thank you words. Let the fragrance of Christ in this great city, this country and the world feel what I'm all about.

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