

K-550 the Mercy of Conversion

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon emphasizes the profound nature of conversion and the critical role of mercy in the believer's life and mission towards Israel.

Duration: 51:45

Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Mercy"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of sacrifice and redemption in relation to the preaching of the word of God. They emphasize that something was released in the initial sacrifice that makes subsequent sacrifices possible. The speaker also delves into the significance of repentance and the depth of one's personal relationship with God. They highlight the importance of recognizing and accepting the revelation of the Lord, as well as the history of witness that has been rejected. The sermon concludes with the speaker acknowledging their own journey of growth and the need for mercy to be integral to one's being in order to effectively share the word of God.

Transcript

They are the enemies of the gospel, for your sake, they have been historically and to this present moment. When the magnitude of that opposition breaks upon the nation's soul, that in opposing what they thought was contrary to God, they were opposing God himself and actually being an agent of persecution and even producing alternate messianic schemes. And that comes with the revelation of the Lord, when they shall see his wounds, we shall see him whom we have pierced, and mourn for him.

That explains why our conversion is not as radical, our calling is not as profound, our sin was not as grievous. So I don't want to make that a rule, but I would say that that should be factored in, that both the enormity of Paul's sin in Israel's and also the magnitude of their calling required the radicalness of the revelation of the Lord and the depth of their conversion. You know that we published a booklet called Apostolic Conversion, centered on Paul's experience, and a pastor who had read it said, well, that's fine for Paul, but I have not seen that kind of revelation, that light has not come to me.

So how can one be expected to have a conversion as profound, as deep? I said, well, now that you have read the booklet, that light has come. The challenge of that word is, for that reader, a measure of that light. So I think it's something that Paul's talking about, that we have the seed of it, but we need a more profound appropriation of it.

Paul got it in one fell swoop, it blinded him, and he remained blind, and would have died blind if God not had sent an Ananias to lay hands on him, to receive his sight. And for three days, he neither ate nor drank. That is to say, he was as a dead man.

The depth of that revelation, no man shall see God and live, almost became literally true in the life of Paul. So that God had to raise him from a death of repentance to become the great apostle. And his proclamation of the gospel had such a power on those who heard it, that they were turned from idols to serve the living God.

And maybe what it's waiting for is a church that has appropriated, to some measure, the radicalness of Paul's conversion, that they might proclaim the gospel of that conversion with an appropriate intensity. We're saved, but not converted, I often say. So many saved, few converted.

It's a good question. But because the circumstances of our coming to God were not as Paul's, does not mean that we're condemned forever to a shallowness of faith. One of the mercies of God is that what Paul got in one fell swoop, the Lord piecemeal gives us, gives it to us in proportion.

So 30 years later, I have a greater apprehension now of sin than the day in which I was saved. And repenting now, inwardly and brokenly and continually in a way that was not possible for me 30 years ago. And it's a mercy that God gives it to me over the span of time, or you would be extinguished.

We can be envious of Paul, but also fearful. So just to conclude and sum up, the magnitude of the sin and the magnitude of this calling, I think are related to the magnitude of the revelation which came to him that brought the depth of that conversion. Some thoughts on the nature of conversion.

Maybe what's wanting is that we need to see ourselves as murderers. Where we in fact have the nice middle-class kids who have kept our noses clean. Potentially, the capacity for murder and atrocity is always with us.

The fact that we have not performed it is merely a providential grace that it was never required. But if it were, what hideous crime and sin and enormity would we fall short? The best of us. And isn't that why Germany had to be the promulgators of the Holocaust? In all of their self-celebration as the land of Goethe, Schiller, Hegel, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, art, culture, philosophy, refinements, civilization, they became bestial in the annihilation of the Jew.

And we who have condemned them as Germans, the German sin, and we won't put a foot in the Volkswagen, are now ourselves moving closer and closer to the revelation of the same thing as Jews taught Arabs. So it's a mercy of God to go that far to arrange the re-creation of the state politically and put us in a position of power that if for no other reason that we can walk out and enact the revelation of our sin that would never have come to us if we had remained in ghetto seclusion, living in our fanciful imagining about ourselves as being virtuous. He's put us in the place of power, threatened where our very existence is threatened, that requires us to act in such a way so as to say, finally, that we're no better than any, and they were capable of the horror and the atrocity that was inflicted upon us, we are now inflicting upon others.

Truly, there's no man good, no not one. That's all the preliminary to Israel's final conversion. How far will God go? And the only thing that justifies it is the issue of eternity, that to save us from the fire that shall not be quenched, it's not extravagant to go all this way, even to the establishment of the state and the whole

drama of Israel with this final revelation.

Well, God did not think it too extravagant to give Stephen's life for Paul, a man who was radiant and whose face shone like an angel, and who miracles and demonstrations of power flowed from him, and yet he was made a sacrifice, brutally beaten to stone to death, clothing laid at Paul's feet, Saul's feet, that he would be goaded by the demonstration of the magnanimity of that man's death in martyrdom. Isn't that a beautiful picture? And God says, I've given men for you, I've given Ethiopians, and maybe he'll give the church for them. Maybe we will suffer a martyrdom, even at their hands, in order to demonstrate the magnanimity of God, his forbearance, his love and forgiveness, that will not produce an immediate repentance, but when they will see the Lord, boom, it all comes together.

How shall we understand the Zechariah 13? Every family apart, and every husband apart, that the depth of their, the pang of their repentance is so profound, they can't even bear to be in each other's presence. Each one has got to go apart and cry out before God personally. That's more than just the revelation of the Lord.

That's the revelation of the Lord, plus a whole history of witness that had been all along rejected, and comes to bear in a single moment when the Lord comes. The gasp of recognition of all that had been spoken to you, which you have not only rejected, but killed and stoned those who have brought it to you, now is seen, comes to light in the revelation of him, when you see his wounds. I tell you what, I would rather see a Jew saved now, than to wait for that moment, and accept that God had poured out the gift of the spirit of grace and of supplications, they would have perished in their very repentance.

It would have killed them. Their bodies would have been so wracked by the anguish of soul of repentance, that it might well have snuffed out their lives. It's a mercy to be saved now, and before that kind of last moment's revelation.

So, this is a great subject. And if this was in our hearts, I think that we would be spurred now, to a much more intense witness to that nation, to that people, to save them from the horror of that final revelation. Though, praise God, it will come.

Just to throw out a question, to dwell on it, and maybe we can take it up after the break. Why has God himself chosen the demonstration of his mercy, as the ultimate demonstration of himself and of his glory? Of all of his attributes, why does he himself select mercy? What is there about mercy, that is so revealing in God's own sight of himself? When Moses asked to see his glory, God showed him his mercy. But what is it about the nature of mercy? And I think it's important for us to understand it, because a great measure of that demonstration will be required to come through us.

That by our mercy, they may receive mercy, is a final enactment of God's mercy toward Israel through the church. But if we don't fully understand what it is, what is it that is to demonstrate that they may obtain? What is mercy? That God himself has chosen it as the ultimate expression and demonstration of himself, and calls it his glory. I'm trying to seek for a definition.

How would we define the word? Loving kindness. Is there a difference between kindness and loving kindness? Usually extended, if not invariably, to those who are totally undeserving. In other words, if it's deserved, is it still mercy? Mercy by definition is a kindness of love extended to those who don't qualify for it.

It's not a payment for virtue or services rendered. It's something of God, by his nature, that is given independent of the condition of those upon whom it is bestowed. It's bestowed because of God, not because of the virtue of those, or the lack of virtue of those who receive it.

Maybe all the more the lack. So, I refer to that scripture in Romans 11, that by your mercy they may obtain mercy. What mercy do we have? God is implying that we have a mercy that we can bestow.

In fact, historically, it's critical that this bestowing be made in the last days through the church, through Israel, that will be absolutely bereft of anything, and just hanging on the ropes, ready to sink into death and oblivion, unless a mercy comes. But it's not an abstract mercy. It's the mercy that the church itself bestows, because it has obtained mercy.

Come on, you guys. What mercy have we obtained that is a palpable something that we are able then to transmit, convey, or minister? Do you think by and large that there's a consciousness in the church that they have received mercy? So, do you think it's fair to say that more mercy has been bestowed upon us than we are aware of? Even that verse, that His mercies are new every morning. Who's conscious this morning of any mercy that has come to us? Yet His word says every day, nothing lends itself to be more transfigured.

The holiest things of God, the greatest demonstrations of God, namely the mercy of God depicted of Jesus on the cross, lends itself to being religionized. That there's something uncanny that the deepest revelation of God to man has a potential to be transfigured into something less than other, sentimentalized, distorted, misunderstood, misused, misrepresented. I don't know how to understand that, but are you understanding what I'm saying? I think the one word, the one single word that would describe that phenomenon, I would call it religious or religion.

Religion is the propensity of men to take the holiest things of God in all of their well-meaning intention, and so to transfigure them as to rob them of their cogency and power. How many of us, even as the most sincere believers, have been really smitten with the awareness of the mercy of God that is revealed at Calvary? I have to confess that I'm not in the foremost ranks of those that have been smitten. I want to be, I know I need to be, but for some reason I have not been.

I don't know what's wanting, but we need a fresh, deep appropriation or apprehension of the cross, or we will have scant mercy to give. When I preached this one day in a church, a woman just cried out spontaneously out of the congregation. She said, how can you expect us to manifest mercy to Israel? We don't even have it for ourselves.

Right within our own congregation, there's a wanting of mercy within the people of Jerusalem. So, though the mercy has been poured out, if it's not recognized, not understood, not deeply appropriated, we'll not be able to demonstrate it. So, something needs to break on our deepest consciousness, and I think I can safely say that that is not the least of the prophetic tasks in the work of restoration, is to take the things that have been cheapened, made commonplace, turned into religion, artifacts, things hanging on walls, around necks, whose meaning has been lost, and to restore the original meaning that God himself intended.

I would say that this is probably one of the most, if not the most, critical area of need if the church is to fulfill its mandate toward Israel. That by our mercy, they may receive mercy. Something has got to happen to move us from mere creedal acknowledgement that we have received mercy to an existential

appropriation so real, so vibrant, that we can extend it.

See, this is a last day's requirement of put up or shut up, and a measure of whether we have moved from mere nominal religiosity and acceding to the truths of the faith in a way that would be acceptable in any church situation, to such a radical, prophetic, and apostolic appropriation that we can actually manifest. And if that manifestation does not come, this people will in fact actually perish. It's going to be a life and death question.

In other words, what I'm saying is, and I've said it many times, mere religious obligation will not enable us to be, to a distressed Israel, what their last hour's predicament will require. It's going to take more than just mere civility or, what can you call it, the polite response. It's going to take mercy.

And how many, like asking the same question in another form, how many Christians are actually conscious of the mercy they've received? We can say, how many Christians are actually conscious that they've been grafted into the root of another people? That we who were without God and without hope, and were far off, have been brought nigh by the blood of the Messiah into the spiritual commonwealth of Israel. Now, if it costs God something to pour out his mercy, namely the death of his Son in the most excruciating agony, what will it cost us? To put it another way, is mercy still mercy if it comes without cost? Religious politeness we can perform, but mercy, the bowels of mercy, that they might obtain mercy when, at their ultimate crisis point, despised and hated among all nations, when to be a kori tenbum to them, and to take them in and to extend mercy, means to sign your death warrant. It means to put your head on the block, because you're identifying with that people and you're going to be subjected to the same persecution and penalty, maybe even more outraged.

I don't have many dreams, but one dream I had of being yanked out of bed by men who pounded the door at like 3 or 4 in the morning, like Gestapo jack-booted hooligans, and being yanked out, you weren't even allowed to get dressed, and thrown into the back of a car. I don't know if it was my vision or another that related this to me, but the description of it is accurate, and the question was asked as they were bundled up and thrown in the back of a car and driven out in the middle of the night. Shit, they cried out, why are you doing this to us? And the answer was, you are among those who are helping the Jews.

There might be a greater fury directed against Gentiles helping the Jews than against the Jews themselves. So, I don't think I'm overstating something, but that we need to recognize that the mercy that God will require, which will be a life and death provision, will come at cost. It was so for God, and it must be so for us.

And indeed, if it does not come at cost, how will those who receive it recognize it as mercy? These are great questions. So, it behooves us, even to attempt to define that word, and I think we're getting at it, we're feeling for it, not the least of things that were included, is that now by virtue of my death, by obedience unto suffering at the cross, is released that which is set in motion that will eventuate in Israel's final and ultimate deliverance, because I'm raising up the people who will receive my mercy through this death that will then be able to extend it to them. It's all together connected in one piece.

It's the final consummation of what was established initially at the cross. And when that breaks on the consciousness of Jews in their distress to recognize that what is being expressed toward them is not some sentimental or human temperamental thing, peculiar to the personality of the one who has taken them in, but they're going to find it in Minnesota, they'll find it in Kansas, they'll find it in Arizona, they'll find it in Mexico, they'll find it in Canada, wherever they are, they're being moved from place to place, the

consistent mercy from place to place will finally have to bring them to this question. What I'm seeing is more than just the temperament or the personality of a single individual.

I'm seeing the consistency of a nature that seems to be in all those to whom we're being brought, and they're all goyim, they're all gentiles. How can I understand this? What gives them this same character and nature, but the fact that something was released in that initial sacrifice that makes this sacrifice possible. In other words, this revelation will draw them to that revelation.

And that, indeed, is the ultimate mercy, so that the redeemed of the Lord shall return to Zion. They didn't begin their journey as redeemed, but in the course of it, they've passed from unbelief to the faith of the revelation of the Son of God in the face of God's people. That's the great thing that is so assumed in that statement.

It is finished. Like quoting Ezekiel 20, I will meet with you in the wilderness of the nations face to face. Quoting Romans 11, that by your mercy may I obtain mercy.

But what brings the Scripture in Romans into conjunction with the Scripture in Ezekiel? My prophetic sense of the connectedness. It's fantastic, it's phenomenal, the mercies of God. And to break on our consciousness first, that we might in turn be the voice by which to break on the consciousness of those who are totally unsuspecting.

Would you say that the present conduct of Israel toward its Palestinian population suggests the knowledge of mercy? Talk about questions that answer themselves. They are just as ruthless and as methodical and violent and inconsiderate as anyone has ever been to them, to us. They're bereft of mercy because they've never obtained mercy.

You have no capacity to extend it to your first obtained it. The same thing is true of forgiveness. That's why they're unforgiving to the Germans.

My mother, to this day, until we recognize to what degree we have received mercy and that in God's sight our atrocities, whether or not we have actually performed them, identifies us with the grossest sins that mankind has ever performed. So, to communicate that is another seeing. So, you need first to see it and then you need to proclaim it or to make it known.

And that very thing defines what prophet is. We can be enriched by the teacher and be brought into an investigation, but in a last analysis, when that word will come to a desperate and final people, and even to the church today in its sleep, has got to come to it prophetically. Then they can have teaching, but they need first to be wakened, stabbed awake, so to speak, by a penetrating word.

But here's the thing, can we speak it persuasively and penetratingly if we ourselves are not the conscious recipients of it? That's the nub. The prophet, therefore, must be the thing in itself. He himself is the Word made flesh.

It's integral to his whole life, his circumstances, condition, his testings, and his trials. He is not allowed to know mercy academically or theologically or exegetically. He's got to know it by having his face rubbed in the dirt, being dragged through circumstances, knocked from pillar to post, till he knows that he knows that he knows.

Then his word is not only credible, but penetrating. And that's what distinguishes that proclamation from teaching or other ministries of the Word. Everything brings us back to the cross.

And I think to the degree that Satan knows that, he would do everything in his power to nullify the meaning of the cross by cheapening it, by sentimentalizing it. When I went to Germany with a message for Germany, I said, you are the victims of the influence of the poet Goethe, G-O-E-T-H-E, who was horrified by the brutality of the cross. It offended his liberal, artistic temperament.

And he said, we need to garland the cross with roses. Take the sting out of it. Because that was his humane or humanistic disposition, which in fact took place.

And maybe more than we realize, it has taken place with us. And that something has happened to cheat us and rob us of the brutality of the cross. I mean, the horror.

And if you read Ben Israel, you know that my experience when I met a German artist on the road, a Jewish hitchhiker, who said, Art, you must not miss this. You have to go out of your way to see this famous painting of Christ crucified, the Eisenheim Altar, what's the other, the Gruenwald, that's the name of the artist, the 15th, 16th century masterpiece. And so, well, I've seen a lot of pictures of Jesus crucified and it looks like a ballet dancer with a piece of cloth nicely wrapped around, even sensual in the way his body is depicted.

When I stood before that painting in that day, my God, I was stunned. And I had to avert my face. The horror, the way in which that body was depicted, was I looking at a man or some grotesque caricature of a man, more animal than man, so brutalized and the flesh, gangrenous, green, you and splinters and pieces from the flagellation sticking in his flesh and his mouth agaping, drool of death out of the corners of his mouth and this poor, stricken, broken hulk of humanity.

That was another depiction. And I'm saying that we need to get back to that. And that's the prophetic task.

And we're going to have to fight for that. We have to contend for that faith. It's not going to come easily.

And if we ourselves are satisfied with mere creedal affirmations of the truth of that faith and have not pressed in and wrestled to get the existential power of it, we will not be able to communicate it to anyone. We will allow the church to remain in its passivity, giving condescension to the truth of something, but never having been profoundly affected by it, to be broken and to be emptied, seeing his emptiness, that we might be the vessels of mercy in our generation. This is the prophetic task.

And can you understand my insane jealousy when I hear that word bandied about by men who don't even begin to perceive this, let alone perform it, and are being flattered and honored everywhere as the man of the hour, the great oracle, and they're running by the thousands to hear and maybe he's got a word for me. And maybe what we're seeing in this crop of prophets is the testimony of a failed Christianity that has not pressed in, has not wrestled, has been satisfied with mere creedal affirmation. Sufficient for us to get by, but insufficient for his glory.

Only one who is jealously driven by the concern for God's glory will welcome the pain of this kind of appropriation of the faith. This is suffering. Hallelujah.

Yeah. And that the fate of a whole people waits on it. Wow.

It's a payoff. The whole destiny of a nation, and more than that, the destiny of all nations by the restoration of that nation. Talk about the faith of God.

And then that the whole thing rests with a prophetic core that will be to the church what it must first be, that it might ultimately be to Israel what it might be, that Israel then might itself be the vehicle of God's mercy to the nations. What a bunch of dominoes. It begins with this first one here, which is us.

Isn't it interesting how discreet God is in showing what goes into the makings of the prophet. We see them come almost full-blown on the stage of history and great enactments and confrontations with false prophets and apostate nation, or we catch the glimpse of their initial call, but the preparation is not depicted for us. It's like a discreet shade drawn, but you can imagine what has gone on behind that shade.

I just so want to drive this stake into your hearts, the existential appropriation of the faith. That's the issue. Everything rests on that.

What does that take? One thing we can say, it will never be obtained in Sunday services. You can multiply them a million times over. God bless the Lord for the provision of them, but something more than successions of services will be required.

But what is that something more? I was talking to David the other day about our children, both wrestling as fathers with the same issue, not wanting to see our kids brainwashed into the faith. So easy to do, to run them through the course and they learn the phrases and they pick it up. They're so imitative and they know how to say the right things, but they get out into the world and bang, they collapse like the proverbial deck of cards.

They have not really a sufficient faith in themselves. So what do you do? Do you abstain from brainwashing? What's the other word for that? Programming. Indoctrinating.

Indoctrinating and let them struggle and go through their own trials and see the depravity of their own souls and come to the place where they come up jackedly on their face before God and cry out for his so great salvation. Are we willing to take the risks of that? They might get pregnant in the meantime or go to jail or who knows what. It's a real tension.

Raise up the children in a way that they should go when they become adult. That's not depart from it. These paradoxes.

You realize that the same question that we're raising about fathers with children is the question that we can raise about fathers in the church, men of responsibility in the church. Do we baby the congregation? Do we safeguard and protect them from the threat of a word that will leave them rattled and disquieted? After all, they're young in the faith yet you don't dare take the risk they might get unglued. My greatest problem is with pastors who by the very nature of their call are protective toward the congregation and want to keep them from the threat that might come in an ungainly word out of a character of this kind.

Isn't that a paradox? That a man acting in the very character of his office and another acting in the character of his office are in a point of collision out of the very logic of their callings and yet there's the congregation hanging in the balance needing this kind of thrust and challenge and not able to get it because they're being protected. So right in the church we have the same kind of issue. Hmm, well I've typed up something I didn't know when I was going to bring it.

Maybe this is the point to introduce it. Distinctive aspects of the prophetic ministry and calling. Taking notes? Maybe the last question, the last examination is define the heart and the essence of the prophetic calling.

What are its distinctive characteristics? I've already mentioned several even as we've been talking this morning. This passion for the jealousy, this jealous passion for the glory of God. I would almost say an insane passion.

Enough to make you a fool for Christ's sake. That if that pastor does by some dint of God and the grace of God allow you to speak, that when you speak you'll be utterly obedient to God knowing that this pastor will regret that they ever came that he allowed you to ever stand up to that platform. So only a divine jealousy for God's glory will enable you to be his fool and the prophet is ultimately God's fool.

We've already mentioned the prophet is the thing in himself and guys don't look at me as the finished product like I wish I could say or come and see. I'm in process but I know enough to say that what I'm sharing is true and I'm not yet formed in it but I desire to be and will be. Remember we said we cannot call the people to mercy unless mercy is so integral to our own being.

It's in our deepest heart of consciousness out of the very dealings of God that makes our word not only credible but penetrating. The fact of the matter is it makes our words an event. An event has got to come to the church.

The event of the cross. Remember what I was prompted to share with you at the end of the prayer time. I said I don't know why I'm saying this but all of a sudden the Lord has just dropped this into my memory of the event in Chicago after that open debate with these student rebels who had closed down the campus to come that night or the next day to this Assemblies of God church and on the platform looking down at these well-dressed middle-class kids many of whom were without Bibles who had come from a good time and the Lord whispered speak on the cross.

And so well as I could in obedience I spoke and boom down they went. The bodies were proliferated everywhere in the aisle on the steps over the altar. So the prophet is the thing in himself.

He has got to be or his message will lack that penetration that can produce that event. The church needs an event. A word that constitutes event and that has got to come out of the anvil with the give me a word the matrix the gut of the man who himself has been by God's mercy brought through the reality of that thing.

And so it's almost like his own crucifixion. To appropriate Christ's you need such an identification with that suffering which cannot be yours just by looking at the painting. There's a measure in which you have to get in the frame and to know something of what that feels like.

I was a recruited layman high school teacher who just agonized over this decision to leave the teaching profession being a depression baby and now enjoying the security of tenure and annual wage increments and health insurance and retirement. There was nothing I wrestled with more in my young believing life than the invitation to become a missionary to the Jews. I was already I was saved at the age of 35 I was already 38.

Hardly a time for a man to start beginning to get schooled but they had a training program and the Lord supernaturally after much agonizing showed that this was his will. We left our little \$11,700 house in

Oakland California. The last time I saw it was being sold for 60 something thousand.

A one-bedroom house but it was ours. Ingrid and I began in a one-room apartment with the bed coming out of the wall. So to leave and make a decision like that was fearful but I had no thought that I was ever to be a preacher.

I was willing to be trained to represent the mission and make mission presentations Christ in the Passover and present the missions program for churches to support. I'd give my testimony maybe but a preacher what presumption. The Lord himself had to give me the business pushing me from behind more and more but the thing about prophetic I'll tell you how that came.

After I've been cast out of Israel as believers and returning to the states after many trials of my fire where I gave a message in Washington DC on Munich for Christ's sake and was virtually run out of the country and the Lord let me simmer in the pain of having brought such a stabbing confrontation and outcry from people that I had really missed it. We came back from Israel and went to California to get another brother's furniture and somehow in the course of that trip and the coming back and the beginning of speaking first messages I think it was that very brother Paul Gordon who said to me don't you know Art that you're you have the call of a prophet. I think I was driving the U-Haul truck.

I looked at what I had no notion at all. I had no idea at all. Then the next was Ern Baxter at whose church I spoke on the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob and I forgot who else and he introduced me and spoke of them as prophetic presentations.

What? I was by so it was by this means usually coming from others that awareness was growing that indeed and then my own life and my own history my trials my tribulations the kind of word that I was bringing the effect of that word just like the Chicago thing made me realize that it was not teaching it was something else and so that was the process. I never had a distinct call of the kind that we read about. So the prophet is the thing in himself and it's not an instant thing you know this is the instant generation.

Give me a tea bag or a frozen dinner and put it in the what you would call that then we'll have it in one and a half minutes. If the prophet is the thing in himself it's a lifetime's making and maybe it's all preparation for one episode Elijah's confrontation for example with the prophets of Baal one or two stark dramatic things and then he's removed and it would not be a lavish investment in God to prepare a home a man's whole life frustration disappointment rejection whatever it is for one final moment of use but if that moment is not fulfilled in the intention of God the whole of his wisdom and determination can be offset or lost. It's a critical moment and a once and for all moment eternal in its ramifications so therefore it's not lavish to say that it requires a whole lifetime's preparation.

Think of our mentality today three months course and you're ready to go off for God. Youth with a mission I mean God bless youth but we're talking now about a little something else and we need to have an appreciation for this and not an appreciation that will allow the prophet to be formed in our own congregations whose growth is very painful and annoying and nettlesome. He's a pain and a mixed bag and he says this and that and some of it is of God and some it's of the flesh and he's always finding something to seize upon and he interrupts the service and you never know how he's going to sound off.

He's unpredictable and part of the maturity of the church is its ability to provide an environment of love that is conducive to the bringing forth of such a one in its midst. I mean where will his first speakings take place? Is God going to set him before men and nations abruptly and immediately? He'll start him off in

your own congregation and you'll have to suffer him. So here again we're brought back to ecclesiology, the church and how little comprehension there is in the church.

The ability to recognize those who already have evidence of the cold and not only to dampen them but rather to encourage them and yet at the same time to clip their wings and to show them the admixture of flesh and spirit and by such a process of gentle and loving admonition and exhortation to help them to the coming forth of a time when their word will go not only to the church but beyond it. Separate unto me, Paul and Barnabas for the worth when to have called them, will be the word of God that again comes when their men who are separated even from the consciousness of their own calling let alone any subtlety of ambition that needs for them to be seen applauded recognized where they can bear the rejection reproach of what will invariably be the consequence of the minister that that process takes place in the church. So the prophet is a thing himself his own life and history in God is calculated to that end but the biography of prophets is not a guy with a little house with a white picket fence and a sweet little wife with an apron on and the cuties all get up and they live happily ever after.

It's chagrin and aggravation and consternation and every kind of thing you can think of because that's how this thing is formed there's no cheap way to incubate it he has got to pass through the essence of the issues in order one day to address them with penetration and authority. The message dovetails with his own life experience and often arises out of his past. The prophet has a history in God.

How many of you guys have ever heard him use that phrase? Do you have a history in God? It's interesting that the overcomers of the last days are those who overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony and love not the life of the dead. The word of their testimony is another way to describe a believer's history in God. The crises for which he has passed the crises of faith where he has been stretched to the breaking where you could not believe that God could bring him through this.

I've gone through some of those things right while the school has been in session and then to see the faithfulness of God come in the morning completely zero out of it dull uninspired wanting to run the other way and just seeing the grace of God begin to operate even in the prayer time and the encouragement that comes by the moving of his spirit and look at today I'm not even part of my intention thinking that Paul would take the entire morning and just to see that this strengthens my faith to see the sovereignty and working of God on the spot so there's got to be a history of that you need to become conscious of your history to become conscious of your history in God is to become conscious of history period and the prophet needs to have a sense of the past because he sees more than

others the continuing influences that issue from the past and profoundly affect the present and the ultimate future he sees the continuum the unbroken span of past present and future as few see it most believers themselves are locked in the present moment a people without a history is a people without an identity but look at the privilege that we have that we should have an identity crisis my god with the past that we have we're related to Abraham Isaac and Jacob and Moses and Paul and the prophets and we have a millennial destiny and future that makes for an extraordinary security and assurance in the present we know who we are in God we have a history and we have a sublime future therefore whatever the the issues of the immediate future however uncertain we can bear them and we can

encourage others to bear them and communicate our sense both of the things that were past and the things future as being integral related and in an unbroken continuum this is the distinctive privilege of the church and it lacks it this is seeing the prophet's view the way he sees and his ability to communicate it as

vision without a vision the people perish and if it doesn't come from the prophetic man it does not come so he has a an awareness of the past a profound concern for the future and a heavy sense of the coming destiny he sees the sweep and the purpose of God the larger picture he's not one for the nuts and bolts for the for the details and how do you do this and that he sees the arching overview and that's what the church needs to see that's the framework of its life every time

i come to the word see we need to underline that he sees he sees he sees other if you don't have that then you're just fixed in that present moment think of churches and their programs so narrow so petty so why because they cannot see what they're doing of what they are about in this moment in the context of something much larger of which they are in connection and movement towards some end because they've not seen the beginning and the past they lack the prophetic view and therefore they're all caught up in the immediate program which very likely has been birthed out of their flesh or out of a necessity to do something and it's not constantly in the continuum of things apostolic and prophetic in fact you have no more apprehension of the future than you have of the past your ability to

perceive the things that are yet future is altogether relative to the appropriation of the things past and do you think you're going to have that for the overarching things of God that pertain to his purpose and glory and like it for your own life are you going to be a dumb dumb about your personal past and not understand and sift through that and the dealings of God in your own life and somehow have a majestic view of God's overarching purposes no way the two things are related if you're going to be one who turns aside to see the burning bush as it pertains to God's purpose for Israel you have already turned aside to see the flaming issues of your own life and have not passed them by oh if you guys got that last statement you can go home now you got your money's worth already just that

one statement and I'll repeat it lest you missed it you'll not turn aside to see the burning bush of God in which the Lord himself is in the midst in a revelation of himself that waits on that moment of a particular kind and ascending into apostolic service if you have not already turned aside to see the burning bushes of this of the issues of your own life most of us look away and our past is the wreckage of failed marriages divorces failed relationships failed church situations but we go on to something else and sleep and sweep the past under the proverbial rug and have not turned aside to see it's painful that's why people don't turn aside and we look to the new situation to remove the memory of the past that's the human propensity it's a propensity that the prophet cannot indulge he

has got to have the guts to face up to his own past and his own failures in fact those failures have very likely been given him by God to fit him to to not miss the burning bush when it comes in the moment of his final calling this turning aside to see remember what we said about it that even the rabbis say that this was the great moment that God waited for if Moses would turn aside because there's no assurance having turned aside you'll never turn back again to where you were all that you trusted in all that you understood all that you understood by the faith your charismatic understanding may go up in a puff you'll never come back to it again you cannot you've seen something new a prophet is ruthless he'll bring a word of destruction if he has to in fact invariably he has to before he

can bring the word of building and planting what God said to Jeremiah root up pluck out destroy tear down that's the first requirement then you build and plant especially the prophet of restoration Elijah must first come and I want to ask you has he yet come you expect an Elijah Jesus says we have to before his return and in what manner and form do you expect that that coming will be corporate corporate an Elijah company of people who have the Elijah call who are ruthless in what they must root out and pluck up and

tear down and would you say you call that mercy talk about mercy would have been mercy to nice and to honor the the treasured traditions and how dear they are to people

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