

On Weakness and Foolishness

by Art Katz

God delights in choosing the weak and foolish things to usher in His holy and glorious work, and to reveal the dimensions of human depravity.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:27

Topics: "Weakness in Faith", "Embracing Foolishness"

Description

Art Katz emphasizes that God delights in using the weak and foolish to reveal His glory, contrasting the kingdom's values with worldly standards. He critiques the church's pursuit of power and efficiency, arguing that true faith is found in acknowledging human depravity and embracing weakness. Katz calls for a radical shift away from self-assurance and the desire for success, urging believers to confront their failures and the uncomfortable truths of their condition. He believes that only through this humility can the church truly reflect God's grace and power. Ultimately, Katz challenges the church to embrace its messiness and to find strength in weakness, as exemplified by Christ's sacrifice.

Transcript

"Art Katz encouraged the duplicating of his audio messages, and there are no copyright claims for those who desire to share them with others. However, Art's books and writings (including articles on this website) do still carry a copyright, and permission needs to be sought if quoting from those is required."

God delights in choosing the weak and foolish things out of which He ushers in the holy and glorious. To foolishness can be added failure and every other kind of word that is an offense in the world, but a delight to God. God wants to rub this into our consciousness, and that the way of the kingdom is utterly contrary to the way of the world. I feel like declaring war on Pentecostal 'Amens,' loud choruses, anything that presumes to know anything, and I just want to be utterly foolish and celebrate failure, confusion and everything that characterizes what I believe is the true work of God, and which would really compel the attention of the world.

I am suspicious of anything that starts auspiciously or impressively, and is well-funded, runs smoothly, has a brilliant building program and which produces shining disciples. It seems to me to be not of God, but has rather the stink of man³/₄precisely because it is too efficient. If something works too well, and has been accomplished without suffering, we are likely out of the purposes of God. It is not until you are saved and

come into the church that you really begin to learn and understand the dimensions of human depravity.

The revelation of what we really are as man begins at that point. That is why the church, the real church, is such a horror and a mess, full of confusion and contradiction, such an ugly revelation of the condition of you and the rest of mankind's condition. If that has not been revealed in your church conduct, then where you are at is not church. Rather, it is something less that keeps the lid on, and allows you enough activity to give the semblance of services, the euphoria of meetings and songs, and a good preaching, but not sufficient to reveal what you are and what we all are together.

That is why grace is not yet upon us all, because it is reserved for the wretched. Until we have come to recognize how wretched we are, how totally bankrupt and incapable we are of anything, and just how much we really live in the spirit of the world, then grace is not available to us. One of the reasons that the church is sick and powerless is that so little is required of God's people, and those who lead them are so fearful to require anything of them. I want to vote for disturbance, for agitation, for confrontation and all of the kinds of things that are necessary to get us off our comfortable chairs and the things that we establish for our satisfaction, even religiously.

We need to be poured out in the things that are inconvenient and contrary to our will and desire. Weakness and foolishness are therefore inherent in the faith, and are the key to the revelation of God's glory. We need to see the collapsing contradiction of our hopes until we finally come to a true ground and true foundation by which God can be Lord of all. A person is not yet in that place so long as there is human pride, assurance and learning how to imitate and to successfully conduct and perform religiously.

The spirit of the world has unquestionably affected us. The whole emphasis today lies on power, ability and the idea 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 charming, just as musical and just as able, and by that build successful churches, movements and organizations. Our world has become drunk with power: electric power, atomic power, and military power. People are looking for their salvation in power terms, even 'powerful' men of God, 'powerful' preachers.

How about 'weak' preachers? We, as the church, have been seduced by the emphasis on a power-celebrating world. We are even ashamed and self-conscious about weakness. We do not want to take the risk of foolishness. We 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 Risen One. "Not by might nor by power but by My Spirit." I know that even as we quote that Scripture, we think of the Spirit of power.

How about the Spirit of weakness? How about the Spirit of humiliation? How about the Spirit of failure that was demonstrated on the Cross with that Piece of Mangled Humanity hanging there before dejected and fearful disciples whom He had totally 'failed.' The sickness of the church is that it lives for the power of the ages gone by. Is that not what our carnal souls are longing for when we talk about Pentecost and the glory of God that fell? We want to see the power! It sounds so spiritual, but how much of that is the celebration of man in our faulty motives.

We want to exhibit ourselves clothed in that power, doing great things. The contrast is the Jesus before His accusers. The Lamb who went silently to the slaughter. By what 'power' did Jesus triumph over the powers of darkness? Their power was a combination of a priestly class and Roman rule; of everything that is secular and religious power. Jesus made a demonstration to those powers by the power of the Cross,

by silence, by humiliation, by suffering, by weakness and finally by death.

There needs to be this power demonstrated by the church. It is the power of foolishness and weakness. It is the power of not succeeding on the basis of your own ability. It is the power of the willingness to be weak in order to allow His life to be expressed. It is the power that comes, not in conventional church circumstances, where we are not together long enough nor intensively enough to reveal and to show our weakness. We need to be willing to come into that intensity, which really takes the mask off, and shows us what our real, naked condition is^¾and especially how hopeless it is without God.

It is the willingness to be taken captive, to be restricted and to be constrained. So long as our desires lay in spiritual things, then there is still that stink of man. We still have our own flavor, and that is the difference between an impotent work and a powerful 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 still living for itself and still assertive.

Therefore the one who allows himself to be overcome makes no demands, has no wall behind which he can defend himself. To be completely poured out is to be left defenseless. We have no 'answer'^¾we remain foolish and utterly weak. It is the 'utter thing' in the inmost place that God is seeking after. I think of our own community fellowship, and the numbers of people who have fled over the years, because "this was wrong or that was wrong, or this condition was irritating, or this elder lacked that, or things were not functioning, and it was not a happy and prospering fellowship."

God, in my opinion, never intended that our fellowship should be 'happy' and 'prospering' at that time. But it was the God-given opportunity to be rid of the stink of man and of self. That was the only condition that could search it out and find it, but because we were so sure, and had such clever ideas about what fellowship should be, and ours did not measure up, then in our irritation, dissatisfaction and in seeing the more attractive things elsewhere, we fled. Every Christian must experience the demanding relationship of community.

It is not an option, for no other provision will fit them for the conditions that we are going to be required to face in a soon-coming hour. Mere Sunday services will never reveal the truth of our condition. We will never be tested in conventional Christian situations to any depth, however nice we think we are. A man who has allowed himself to be overcome is one who will allow himself to be put into that kind of a situation where he is going to have to face his own stink and failure, and that also of the other saints who are joined with him.

He must have his humanistic and romantic ideas, even of what the faith is, shattered and destroyed until he just collapses in a heap. You cannot go on, but it is at that very point that the blessed hope has the opportunity to come. That is where life really begins. That is where God becomes God. That is where His grace becomes grace. That is where he begins to unfold His will and His way, and provide the energy in the very place where our own efforts failed to obtain. How many of us are willing to go down to that before we can come up^¾down to the human thing before we can come up?

In order to demonstrate the coming Kingdom, there first needs to come a ruin, a scandalous failure, and a collapse. Somehow you cannot leap over it and still build the everlasting Kingdom until something first falls away. And the church is that entity given of God to reveal what could never have been seen in the world. The world does not want things disturbed; it wants things smooth, efficient and smart. There is something about man himself that is an abomination to God; his self-assurance, his 'know-it-all attitude,' his

competence in learning how to conduct services and perform ministry, establish organizations and conduct programs and outreaches all in the name of Christ, but contrary to His Spirit. The spirit of foolishness, weakness, failure is the spirit that overcomes the powers of this world. This is the faith. Have we said 'Yes' to that?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/on-weakness-and-foolishness/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net