

Preaching - a Sacred Responsibility - Part 2

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the sacred responsibility of preaching as a resurrection phenomenon that requires death, trust, and active participation from the audience.

Duration: 59:02

Scripture: Isaiah 1:2, Isaiah 1:18-20, Matthew 6:33, John 7:16, John 7:46

Topics: "Preaching"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker describes his experience of being called to speak to a happy congregation. However, he is faced with a choice - to speak based on the reality that the people are expressing or to speak based on the reality that God has shown him. He chooses to speak the truth of the condition he believes God has revealed to him. The speaker emphasizes the importance of the gospel awakening the church to reality and the need for preachers to address the hard truths and issues of life that the congregation faces, rather than avoiding them for the sake of a happy response.

Transcript

Having quoted Bonhoeffer, that he anticipates a new kind of speaking, new language, perhaps completely unreligious, which liberates and redeems. If our word does not liberate and redeems, it's not the Lord's word. I was just saying at the break, what did they say of Jesus? No man spake as this man.

And there's a degree to which, if he is the one speaking in us and through us, that men ought to acknowledge that again. It says the apostles, that they took note that they had been with Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus Christ brought into existence not of one man, but of the whole world into a new light.

The living breath of a new era permeates all authoritative preaching. The living voice of the gospel drives away the power of darkness. That's an interesting statement.

As you're not only addressing your audience, the powers of darkness have been affected by that proclamation, what is issuing. Thus, everything is made new. The liberating air of the new moves through all our words and blows through all our sentences.

Pedantic biblical knowledge is shattered. It is the spirit who brings life. What's the new thing? The resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So that true preaching, true proclamation is a resurrection phenomenon. If it's going to be imbued with the power of that risen life, what also must accompany it? If it's to be a resurrection phenomenon, what also must accompany it? Death. There's a measure of death that needs to be born if there's to be a measure of the life expressed through that word.

It may be a death that precedes it in the formation of the vessel, the history with God. It may be in the very message itself. It may be the mortification, the willingness to be disappointing or to fail is a death that the preacher has to bear.

It may be a trusting. What is faith if it's not death to any human dependency and an utter casting of yourself upon God? As I so often give the example of being in the seminary for two years and having every day to sit in the chapel service, and I cannot remember one message in two years of the speaking from the most astute biblical scholars and teachers and administrators. Why? Because every message was so well formed.

They knew months in advance when they would be called upon, and when their time came, they had an airtight word. It was perfectly exegetic. It was biblically and doctrinally sound, and it was correct, but it was not life-giving.

There was no death. Why? Because the speaker took pains to avoid death. He was not going to give God an opportunity on the spot to fill in the spaces.

He came thoroughly prepared from the first word to the last to see to it that he would not fail before his colleagues or his students. He was not willing to taste the death of trust, that the Lord would on the spot bring something of his rhema into that message. And for me, the greatest delight is when I see that, when God brings himself, because though you have a thought or a direction, you don't have the word, and you're trusting the Lord on the spot through the operation of his life to bring it.

And that trust is a form of death because the death is the prospect of failure, the disappointment of men, et cetera, et cetera. It's more right, not so much the preparation of the message. I'm continually writing, preparing, and studying.

But in the proclamation, there's a great space for God where I don't know how, like, I didn't know yesterday. There were phone calls from overseas, e-mail letters, a crisis had come up. I got up late for the first time since the school began.

Everything was a mumbo-jumbo. And I remember how many times I said yesterday, this is experiment perilous. You remember that? What was I saying? I don't know which way this is going to go.

I know that we should be looking into the text on Daniel, but what will happen with it, who knows? What happened? It became an event. The word became an event because the Lord on the spot did something in the areas where we could not bring our preparedness. But the greater sense is this.

We should always be preparing, not the message but our life. We should always be preparing. We should always be students, always be in a place of study, always in a place of examination, discussion.

But in the actual proclamation, there's got to be room for God, on the spot, as the rhema, the now speaking. And if we're unwilling to take that risk because we're afraid that we'll lose the attention or the respect of our hearers, then they get a nicely prepared thing, but they don't get the now speaking of God,

the resurrection lifting that power that transports and brings you into that which is new because you have not been willing to suffer some proportion of the death that must proceed it. That's why Paul said, I die daily.

There's a daily dying if there's a daily serving, if our service is to be in our preaching a resurrection phenomenon, and that this is God's way to the world which was begun in Israel and must be the intent of every sermon. The stumbling block of Jesus is inseparable from Israel. Jesus Christ and his person, the saving and healing word of God, in this form he upholds and permeates the preaching of those whom he has sent.

It is only through divine love that a man surrenders and is fully able to serve other men. Love does not come from a person's ego, but from God. It is only through love that God acts in us through Jesus Christ, while otherwise we ourselves are always the one acting, we're always the one speaking, we're always the one teaching, always the one preaching.

It's only in love that God will come into the picture and be the speaking of our speaking. Now, that doesn't mean you're playing patsy or making nice or saying favorable things that are easy to be received and entreated. It might be the love of God requires you to be harsh, requires you to be foolish.

One of the greatest demonstrations of the power of God in the word is, as many have heard from past tapes, is when God had me to mock a congregation. And they were singing, and I was brought up to the platform, We got Jesus, you got Jesus, I got Jesus, we got Jesus. It was the happiest Pentecostal full gospel assembly.

I thought, what am I doing here? I'm completely out of place. They don't need anything from me. They got it all together.

I need from them. And then when I got up to speak, I had no message. That's the death, no message.

More times than not, when I get up to speak, I have no message. I've got many messages, but unless the Lord is giving a thought or a word, you're bereft. You stand trusting that after you pray, something is going to quicken.

And you know what quickened? I opened my mouth, I had not yet prayed, and out came, I got Jesus, you got Jesus, we got Jesus, and a complete mock of their ceremonial performance. And people were horrified and shocked. I was horrified myself.

If you're not offended by your own word in you, you're likely not proclaiming the word of God. And so I said, Oh, Lord, forgive me. I've not prayed yet.

Look what's coming out of me. Oh, what must be my carnal condition? Mocking your people. Oh, Lord, forgive me.

Wash me in your blood. Take this corruption from me. Bring forth your word that is appointed for this hour.

Lord, I pray once and for all for Jesus' sake, for your congregation, for the church. I went on like that. I opened my mouth, and I said, I got Jesus, we got Jesus, you got.

The same mocking after the prayer as before, and the people broke when I said, You got Jesus? I said, I said it. The Lord said it. It was like a stabbing indictment.

You got Jesus? You blow hard, singing lustily out of the top of your lungs. Have you really got him? And that was the beginning of a service that went on until 2 o'clock in the morning. The man who had brought me up to the platform, a full gospel official, came to the microphone and confessed that he was in a continuous state of adultery.

People were coming up to the platform and confessing their sins. That began with a mock. But here's what I want to say.

That mock was God's love. When Paul at Mars Hill said, I perceive in all things you're too superstitious. Whap! He gave it to them right in the kisser.

What are you saying? We're intellectuals and philosophers, superstition and for the ignorant, and you begin your monumental address to us by accusing us of that? It began with an insult. But it was an insult that engaged them. So I'm saying that the love of God, more often than not, is going to be some patsy, condescending, nice thing that entertains the people.

It may well be the insult. But does God have the possession of you if his love requires that expression? Or will you stop if you yourself are offended? If his love has not the operation, he's not going to be speaking. That's what this German theologian recognizes, and we need to recognize it otherwise, or else we're acting and performing correctly, but life is not going forth, because it's only his life out of his love.

And that love might well be offensive before it's a blessing. So it's essential for the sermon to eventuate in prayer and petition. Faith must come to life in the hearer.

The listening community cannot maintain an attitude of passive hearing, but must enter the powerful movement of the spirit. Something is happening. Something is coming from God.

It's a transaction. The audience cannot be less passive hearers. Something is required over that word, some response, some interaction, some time of prayer, an event.

And I often say to the people after I finish the message, now you have the choice of allowing this to remain as a message or becoming an event by what you are now going to do. You can walk out saying, I liked it or I didn't like it, but if you'll pray according to the word that has come and transact something with God, the message becomes an event by your participation. I give them always that opportunity to respond.

Not that I need to be gratified by hearing people pray or coming to the altar, but I know that it's a moment that will not come again in quite this way. It's a once and for all. And that they themselves are not called to passivity, but to participation.

For we are ruined by passivity. And I love, therefore, what this man is saying. Faith must come to life in the hearer.

Something must happen in the hearer, for the hearer, by the hearer. The listening community cannot maintain an attitude of passive hearing, but must enter the powerful movement of the spirit, which is to say the word of God is that powerful move. So the place where the preacher is required to hear most exactly what the biblical word is saying is where the prophetic or apostolic message is bringing the error of God's people to light.

It's not going to be a transaction and it's not going to be an act of love unless it deals with God's people, where they are and where they need to be. More often than not, the prophetic word is a corrective word, a challenging word, if not a threatening word. And that's God's very love.

And the preacher is always the first to be involved, which is to say he's the first one in and the last one out. He's got to be the priest that puts his feet in that water first and trusts that that Jordan is going to part. And he's got to stay in that place of tremulous uncertainty while all Israel passes through.

He's got to continue that word. He began it, he's got to continue it while at the same time looking at their faces. Mamma mia.

The deadliest ambush and trap for the word is looking into the faces of God's people while you're speaking. And it may well be that they're not just cynical or mean or angrily looking at you with contempt. It may well be that they're deep in thought over what is being said to them.

They have never been so challenged, but the way they look is hostile, or at least you imagine it to be that. And the devil is at your elbow to help you to that interpretation so that their very faces chill your soul. And the temptation is to quit or to turn to something more pleasant.

You're the first one in, but you've got to remain in until they all pass through and the word has brought them to the other side. This is the priestly faith and task that true preaching is. If it is to bring to God's people the errors that need to be brought to the light.

So it's a task that demands struggle and will experience resistance. And Kierkegaard, who's he? What's his first name? Søren. Who? Søren Kierkegaard.

Søren Kierkegaard, the great Danish philosopher and critic of the ceremonial formal church of his generation in Denmark, which pertains to this very day. Dead as a doornail, and it killed him. It was an anguish.

One of his books is called Attack on Christianity. Is he really opposed to the faith? No. He's attacking what purports to be Christianity in that bourgeois liberal culture of his generation that was totally inoffensive and predictable.

Well, what does he say? In a certain sense, the preacher should bring his hearers to proclaim, How shall we flee from this man? How do we get away from this? This guy is unbearable. We can't bear to hear him. What he says searches out all my hiding places.

But how can I get rid of him? For every moment, he looms over me. This is an exaggerated statement. But unless people are wanting an escape, then probably they're not being challenged.

And so that's what he's saying. True preaching will almost make the hearer to cringe against the man and against the word that's coming because it's so fearful, so demanding, and so requiring. Would to God they had not heard it, because now once they hear it, they're responsible for that word.

And I tell them many times, You'll be sorry you invited me. You'll pay for this. This is going to cost you.

Or you thought you were getting a Jewish cutesy experience? Well, surprise. You're going to get a word that is going to flay you, and you'll be responsible for it because it will be the word of the Lord. And that's, in fact, what they get.

They've got to hate it even as they hear it and hate the one who brings it because if they'll not receive it, it's got to be dismissed as not being God's word and actually being false, and therefore you're false also and deserve to be stoned. This is what's involved if the word is to be truly the word and not many preachers are wanting to suffer those conditions. So the church should be the place where we could exorcise the evil nonsense which the blind leaders of the blind practice on their people.

It's not the place where the nonsense is perpetuated. It's the place where the nonsense is revealed as nonsense. Again and again, German nationalism finds expression.

Now he quotes Friedrich Nietzsche. He went from a Danish philosopher to a German philosopher who committed suicide in the collapse of his whole mind and reason in the desperate thing to which he was brought by the failure of the same kind of church in Germany as Kierkegaard had to observe in Denmark which essentially remains to this day. It drove a precious man insane.

But while he yet had his sanity, he wrote, this inner cowardice in the face of reality which is cowardice in the face of truth. It's a matter of discovering the authoritative nonconformity of the gospel against the world free from all confusion and concealment. What's wrong with the church? Cowardice.

In the face of reality, cowardice in the face of truth. It doesn't want to hear and it doesn't have preachers who want to bring a word that should be heard. Then that cowardice is death.

It was death for the man and it became death for the nation. So this kind of preaching demands courage that no one has of himself. It comes through Christ's victory over death.

Only in confrontation with the real dilemmas of life does the listening church come to know the power of God's word. If it's just an abstract word or a general word, however true, however biblical, it doesn't become a living word. It becomes a living word when the word deals with the substantial issues of the life of the hearers which is empty and hollow as long as it is governed by a detached biblicism and carefully avoids the urgent daily questions that arise as crisis in the life of God's people.

The word should address the living situation, the crisis through which individuals pass and not circumspectly pass them by because it's a biblical word. That biblical word is biblicism. It's a deformed thing, though it's a correct thing.

It's not a life-giving thing. Why would a preacher shun dealing with the issues of the life that the congregation faces? Too nitty-gritty, too explosive, too likely to be misunderstood, too likely to offend. Safer to avoid any particular application to the real conditions of those whom you're addressing and safer to give a general biblical message that they can approve without being personally confronted.

I love what this man is summing up about the condition of the German church for it remains still and it's more our condition than we know. So true proclamation is the call to wake up from the sleep of death. The kairos, K-A-I-R-O-S, the Greek word, not chronological but the decisive time and moment has come.

The gospel of the proclamation summons us to take part in a great movement and where the gospel is heard calling us to wake up, we have new desire to experience the whole of reality. It's remarkable that the issue of Israel, which I think is central to the church in the last days, does not just awaken the church to Israel, it awakens the church to reality. And I don't understand it more than any subject that I've ever seen or proclaimed that when this message, this subject is addressed, it's not just an awakening to that subject, it's an awakening to reality.

It's an awakening to life. It's an awakening to all kinds of issues. The church itself, what ought it to be, how is it to be it? The issue of the word, the issue of the spirit, the issue of the gifts, the issue of church government, the issue of politics, the reality, involvement to the world, the issue of true prophets against false, the issue of what is episode.

Every issue becomes an issue when this issue is powerfully attended. And for the want of attending that issue, every other issue has lapsed. And therefore we find ourselves in an increasing unreality, majoring on minors because we have avoided or the great subject has not been brought to our attention.

We don't even know how anti-Semitic we are until it is brought up. It's latent in us. I believe that.

It's intrinsic to being Gentile. I'm not condemning, I think it's just the nature of the thing until the word itself about the subject reveals how deeply resistant we are to it, if not hostile. I have seen the most enormous and embarrassing reactions to the word of God on Israel that I have never faced with any other subject.

In England especially, in Great Britain, I don't know what it is. There's a hostility to the place of Israel and the purposes of God for the Jew that the Church does not want to recognize. So I came to a church, I'll never forget the event, where I was with John earlier in that same trip where I was kind of a guest to a conference sponsored by his movement.

My books were available. They were never mentioned or located. The congregation was not, my name was not mentioned as if I were not even present.

And there's a complete dismissal of myself in that congregation that no meeting of the Elks or the Rotarians or any secular worldly society would have permitted as being impolite. Here a movement calling itself apostolic did not even acknowledge that I was in the room and though I'm known globally and my books were not even mentioned, it was a total insult. Why? Because I bear a message.

In fact, I told them, I told John, I have to say I have not only a message for this conference, I have a message for the nation of Great Britain. And at one point the apostolic leader said, I don't care who comes thinking that he has a word. We are going to seek this experience.

They were into the Toronto move and in fact they did receive or have that experience. It was a complete dismissal. It's not the issue of myself but the issue of Israel that is really the offense.

Later on in that same trip, I came to a congregation. I had diarrhea that night and the brother had desperately to find me a place to take care of myself before coming to the service so we came in late, hot, perspiring, flushed, no time to prepare, out of whack, out of joint, and they're calling me to speak. I had no message.

In a moment the Lord said, Romans 11. I said, Lord, that's kid stuff. That's elementary, my dear Watson.

Everybody knows that. Romans 11. I came up and I spoke Romans 11 more fetchingly and preciously in a new way that I had never before spoken but the faces were so hostile, so antagonistic, you would have thought I was inviting people to an orgy.

What am I saying that they're looking at me as if I'm bringing dung and refuse and stink into their congregation? I spoke the word of God in Romans 11. I sat down and the meeting was never dismissed. There was no prayer that followed, no thank you but no thank you.

They got up and they left the room and that was the end. I had never experienced anything more crude and impolite than that but their custom was to serve tea and so one elder had to remain to serve tea and I was the only customer and I'm dangling my teacup and I look up at this man and I said, you know, my dear brother, please convey to your colleagues that they're not under obligation to receive my understanding of Romans 11 but they are under obligation to recognize that it was a sound biblical word. It may not be an interpretation of it to which they are suited but at least have a respect for someone coming bearing a word that is consonant with scripture and this treatment, this abject leaving the room without even ending the meeting in prayer will come back to you to haunt you and it may well be an end of your fellowship in the rude way in which you have treated the man and his word.

I don't know if they still remain but it was an event I'll not forget. I've never seen such rudeness except over the issue of Israel. What is it with men? What is there in the antagonism that God yet has a place for this people because they have a place for themselves and the very word restoration, I found out later this was the restoration movement but what are they restoring? Not Israel but the church.

The church has become the thing in itself, the end all and the be all and has replaced Israel and they are offended by any reference to this people who have had their time and have blown it and they don't want to hear this again. So you don't even know that you're anti-Semitic because to be hostile to the purposes of God for Israel is to be hostile to the God who has the purposes. Anti-Semitism by whatever veil form in this last ultimate expression is anti-God.

It's an attitude against God and a resentment against that which he has chosen and it needs to be recognized and it will not be recognized until the word comes. So the word needs to come. Back again to the issue of the tabernacle of David.

Why has the charismatic movement chosen to interpret that as a form of worship rather than what it seems to me clearly to be and verified in scripture as being a statement of Davidic rule because to understand it as Davidic rule is to understand that it pertains to a kingdom that is Israel's. Is it time now to restore the kingdom to Israel is not a question that Jesus dismissed as being false only as a question out of place and out of time. Something must precede it.

But he never dismissed the validity of the question. The kingdom is Israel's but it's not for Israel. It's through Israel to all the world.

But why hasn't the charismatic movement seen it that has turned the phrase on its ear and made it a self-aggrandizing thing as worship for their own enjoyment because they have no view of the kingdom. They have no view, no expectation of the real government of God that will be seated in one place only, Zion. From that holy hill I have established my king and given him the heathen for his inheritance.

So to the degree that they have no heart for God's purpose for Israel and for the Jew they have taken to themselves in this arrogance definitions and understanding that celebrate themselves as the church. Even the word restoration. Where did they get it from? Acts 3.21 that Jesus is contained in the heavens, self-contained waiting for the restitution or the restoration of all things spoken by the prophets since the world began.

The prophets did not speak about the restoration of the church. They spoke about the restoration of Israel. That in the last days the mountain of the Lord's house will be elevated above all the mountains and hills and to it all the nations will come to learn the ways of the God of Jacob.

That's the restoration which the Lord is waiting. And my experience that the greatest opposition that I have faced and conflict is not so much from evangelical and fundamental Christians but as those who purport ironically to be either apostolic or prophetic. Figure that one out.

Men with whom I should have the greatest affinity in the likeliness of our callings are the ones from whom I have the greatest rejection and the greatest opposition because they are in a restoration movement that has as its object not the thing of God's choosing but their own. And I said to my brother until the church will surrender and submit and break from its arrogance and receive the humbling thing of God's choice of Israel it cannot even define itself or know itself as the church. Its own perception of itself is deformed if it has omitted that very subject which is the grace of God for its own perception of itself for its call for that purpose to move them to jealousy to exhibit, express mercy, they might receive mercy.

To omit that consideration as a central if not fundamental mandate for the church that is the church is to lose your definition of the church even when you applaud present Israel. So what is the task of preaching of the proclamation of the word of the prophetic function? It's to awaken the church before the world from the depths of the sleep and bizarre dream world from which we also must be called. Whether it's charismatic, whether it's the play on revival whatever the emphasis that is not authentically of God or suffers distortion for the want of the central thing that God would put before us the church itself is in a sleep and in a bizarre dream world from which it needs to be awakened and the only thing that can awaken it is the true word of God to those who will preach it with courage.

It demands courage but it's not a courage that any man has of himself. It has got to be the courage which is very laud. So people say to me sometimes after they hear a fearful word come out of mouth Art, weren't you afraid to proclaim that? I said no, not at all.

The only thing I was afraid of was not to proclaim that. My fear was not of men's anger against the word my fear is failing to be obedient to the God who sent me to speak it and who give us a courage to face men and he tells us don't look at their faces. You've got to have an inward sense of what you are about in God as being sent and bearing that word.

That's not just your own little personal, private and particular thing that you enjoy for its intricacies or the delight of the word but the sent word, the momentous now appointed word that must come forth in point of time as sent and you may well displace it by being preoccupied by something that you enjoy and which will bring you a happy response from the audience rather than their antagonism for the bringing of a hard word that makes a requirement that they don't want to hear. If you don't get a copy of the little booklet on the rack of apostolic conversion you are missing the classic. All that is is the transcript of a spoken word in California when after two nights of ministry I was ready to quit and it was a charismatic congregation and yet the word kept coming back into my teeth.

I had to suffer the frustration of a word against which a wall had been erected and I'm sitting on the treasure of God ready to pour out and I knew it was pointless and on the third day I said, Lord, unless you do something this night there will be no fourth night, four nights of meetings. We fasted and prayed that day with the exception of the brother from Venezuela who accompanied me because I fasted didn't mean he had to fast after all, what am I trying to do? Bring a spirit of control that manipulates him that because I'm fasting he should fast? He ate. Nevertheless, and the word came.

You'll read it. That booklet is the transcription of the word exactly as it was spoken and down they came because this people had covenanted with God silently this far but no further. And interestingly enough,

and I don't think it accidental they enjoyed a superior lifestyle.

The very house where we were staying I don't know how many thousands of square feet with gorgeous cars, SUVs, boat in the driveway they had a lifestyle to maintain that was yet to be Christian but not so radically Christian as to threaten those vested interests and therefore the resistance. But when the word came, down they went and remained down and I knew that a transaction was taking place out of confrontation of a once and for all word that had come that would not come again and when they got up they were different and have remained different since. That word is now in Dutch, Danish, Russian, other languages and bringing its effect worldwide.

It was the word of the Lord given in the moment of crisis time in which it had to be spoken with courage. So, it's this kind of proclamation that world which seems to us to be a final reality sinks away and the true world appears. Our first look at real life man finally begins to really live to live significantly and as we spoke yesterday to embrace true values for the word of the Lord has come and the word of the Lord that puny, frail, verbal, auditory thing in contest with all of the paraphernalia of the world all of its nomenclature, all of its assets all of its visible attributes all of the things that speak of its power, its prestige to which men have subscribed in their lifestyles comes a frail verbal word that counters and is contrary to the supposed reality and values of that world to which even the church subscribes until the word comes.

One more illustration and I'm not giving you these illustrations in any way to laud myself but what else shall I draw from to give insight to what the word of God means in Australia, many of you have heard these illustrations but they're timeless and I praise God for all of them it's a church that was not on my schedule the greatest charismatic success of that district in Australia so I went tripping like a doe and what a delight this is going to be and I'm sitting on the platform and they're having a bash I mean talk about worship, talk about praise my God, what am I doing here?

I'm absolutely superfluous these people have it all together I myself have never approached such dimensions of praise and celebration of God that they're expressing and while I'm looking on them waiting to be called on, no message again, the Lord froze the scene and they're like this but instead of seeing joyous countenances the mask was removed in a moment of time and I saw the truth of their condition insecurity, fear, self-contempt, hatred of God the truth of their condition of a nation whose foundations and origins go back to the English prisons that were emptied to send them colonizers and that they have never gotten over their complex that the nation was built on the foundations of England's social scum they bear a continual national inferiority complex and that's why they have to

be macho and crush beer cans and have tattoos and win the world tennis titles because there's a lingering disdain for themselves and that was under the superficial exterior of the amens and the hallelujahs and the Lord only gave it to me for a moment and then he took it away and they went back again and then I'm hearing my name called I felt like a man going to his execution in fact, as I've said on many occasions when I watch other men come up to the pulpit with glee and with delight I think they're almost disqualified I invariably go up like a snail isn't there some other alternative? where's the exit? what am I doing here? why do I have to be the one? that they take delight in this? they must be doing something enjoyable for me, it's a dread experience I'm hearing my name called I get

up and I look out on this happy scene and I have a choice to make do I speak in view of the reality that these people are expressing or do I speak out of the reality that God gave me in a flash of a moment when he froze the scene and showed me another reality which I believe is the truth of their condition no choice

for a man who was sent from the Lord I opened my mouth and I described to them what I had seen dear saints if you've ever come to a near head-on collision you're out of your lane and you're coming to the crest of a hill you thought you could turn in before the hill but you didn't turn in fast enough or you were blocked and there's another car coming right at you and it's sheer death that's what I faced it's like people slapped on the brakes you could feel the shuddering

because a moment had come of put up or shut up that either they would kill the man bringing this disparaging word and daring to bring any kind of suggestion that what they are about is false or they must fall before that word as being the truth of their condition and go back to square one and begin all over again a moment of truth had come confrontation and in that moment I don't have a word to tell you how excruciating while you're waiting to see the outcome and by every reckoning it should be that they'll stone you but I have to say to the glory of God and to a credit to this people they fell before the word of God it was the word of truth and they could not contest it it was a statement of another reality that they themselves were not willing or able to recognize until the word came

the word brought the definitive unassailable reality of the truth of their condition and in a moment they recognized it and broke before it and went back to square one to begin all over again and not to embark on worship as technique which they had brought to a high pitch of perfection but to be a creaky squeaky groaning while they writhe and start from scratch to come to the reality of God that is reality, sanity, truth I don't know if Paul and Adrian remember how we covenanted at Ben Israel Lord don't allow our worship to exceed the truth of our condition because we know we can disguise it we've got the most gifted musicians and the voices and we can easily create an aura of worship and an impression of reality in God that is not the truth of our condition so keep our worship pegged to

that truth and the Lord took us at our word and our worship was often pitiful, squeaky out of tune, out of joint out of harmony, out of sync why? because we were ourselves out of truth, out of harmony, out of sync if our worship was true worship, it will grow up together with the truth of the reality of God's sanctifying work in us that is going to come at cost and at pay when I see worship separated from truth that congregation is already on the path to deception, for it is deception so the word of God is corrective, the word of God brings things as God sees them, for that alone is truth and it's no accident that the prophets of old were called seers before they were proclaimers they see the reality as God sees it, hear O earth and give ear O heavens for the Lord has spoken and the ass

knows its owner and the beast the beast knows its master's crib and the ass knows its owner but my people do not know, they do not consider O sinful nation laden with iniquities from the top of your head to the soles of your feet sores that need to be mollified and bound up you're like a shed in the garden the city of righteousness has become the city of whores and your wine has turned to water, your silver to dross what an indictment spoken to an Israel that will not hear, so that the prophet has to call upon the elements, hear O heaven give ear O earth not only will they not hear, they will not see, because at the very time that the prophet is speaking, this assessment of their condition, they are prosperous, their worship is continuing they have a priesthood, they're making sacrifices,

they're obeying the law, superficially at least they're doing everything right and they're prospering and here's a man coming with a statement that he sees with such acuity that is completely in contradiction with the seeming reality that they are enjoying in that moment and yet what he sees is how God sees it and if they'll not repent at his word for the truth of what is being spoken they'll suffer the judgment that must inevitably follow but you think I've not had that experience, where I've spoken and I know that I'm not

speaking to the congregation but that the word needs to be spoken it needs to go out, into the earth and into the air, though the congregation will not hear it and receive the benefit nevertheless, though their faces are completely turned off, the word must go out,

hear oh heaven and give ear oh earth, it's a mystery as Isaiah had to do and I can assure every one of you who has a prophetic call that it'll not be long before there'll be an occasion when you have to perform this when I spoke, one of the first messages beyond my testimony, as the youngest of believers, invited to the full gospel regional conference in Washington D.C. and praying in my naivety and fasting before the Lord they wanted my testimony because it was powerful but what the Lord gave me was eunuchs for Christ's sake that there are some eunuchs that are born eunuchs, they're biologically deformed there are some eunuchs that are made eunuchs against their will but there are eunuchs who make themselves eunuchs for Christ's sake, I was over my head I didn't know what I was speaking,

but I spoke it and when I finished wow, there were two lines of people, one waiting to kill me and the other to hug me because people were indignant that the word was being misconstrued as being literal, and that therefore their children would not have children they couldn't be grandparents, etc, etc and when we were invited that night as one of the speakers to the penthouse apartment of Demas Shekarion in that Hilton hotel, and I went with Inger we were treated like turds we came in like a stink poor Inger, what she's had to suffer being married to a man like me and people turned their shoulder in such reproach but I have to tell you that when I finished that message a man came up to me and said, Art I'm a prophet sent by God I'm a Jew and a prophet sent by God to tell you that you have

missed the mind of the Lord and done incalculable damage to the body of Christ you need to go back up to the microphone and recant your message as having been wrong it was like the knife went right into my heart and turned at the hilt why? because he might be right the fact that I had fasted is no guarantee that I was right I could have been wrong and I can always be wrong but somehow I did not go back up and this man continued to haunt me in fact I soon became an exile and we left the country and I lived in English country Denmark, which was for me a wilderness and this guy was sending me telegrams periodically on Jewish feast days you need to retract your message and send the word to the Voice magazine that it was a wrong word and he kept haunting me and I'm upstairs in our little attic

room bleeding because he might be right and the Lord is silent why doesn't he say don't worry, you were obedient that was my word don't give him any heat not a word like that, silent letting me feel the full brunt and baptism of fire of what it means to proclaim the word of God it's not a snap, it's a death again and again and again and somewhere in the course of those weeks as I'm licking my wounds and feeling like where do I ever think to get off to preach a message who am I? it's ok to give your testimony, but you were presumptuous to think that you could preach at a regional conference worldwide with Kathryn Kuhlman all these big celebrities and the enemy was giving it to me and I'm saying yes to every tormenting accusation that he's making until one day I'm reading Watchman Me and

The Spiritual Man and I come to a page where he said he's speaking on eunuchs he said, if you miss this by the spirit it's the greatest offense, if you receive it by the spirit, it's the greatest blessing and then he recited every scripture that I employed that night in that message and the burden went off me like that but it was months before that burden was lifted and the Lord allowed me to feel the full brunt of what it means to bear the word of God when you might be wrong and there are vindications that will not come in this life at all, when there are embarrassing and humiliating failures and defeats and moments when the church has been turned upside down it was in Winnipeg that I was accused of contradicting the body of Christ by

my word and that you'll not see until we get to

heaven, we shall see as we are seen and the Lord then will show us to what degree we were faithful until now, you know how I pray?

Lord, forgive me Lord, I know that for the volume of much speaking there's sin, the word tells me that and I ask your forgiveness for the iniquity of much speaking, I ask your forgiveness for the iniquity of priesthood that I know that even when I'm well-meaning, I'm a candidate for error and that even when I'm bringing a true word something can intersperse itself or come involuntarily in a moment as illustration, anecdote that was not from you, forgive me your blood, Lord, I'm continually aware that that speaking is sin and that's that's how we'll not be accusatory and condemnatory when we have to bring convicting words and judgment so the issue of authentic relatedness is the critical key and you're probably right those men are not sent by God, they're self-initiating and

self-congratulating and self-validating because when one of these men made his appearance at our locality conference in Minneapolis there was the prophet speaking about the other one who was to come, who has since become nationally, internationally known at that time was quite obscure I sent a little note to the pastor from Jeremiah, the prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means here's a prophet prophesying falsely of one to come whom we should acknowledge and honor and esteem and receive so that that one can bear rule falsely by that means when you read the book of some of these leading men whose names I've already mentioned and the organizational structures that they have established how have they established them? it came to them by word of prophecy by who? by

someone who's got a school of prophets that produces them every three months and gave them a word of prophecy, God is going to exalt you you are the chief apostle over God's global you will have a prayer a building of untold millions you will have you, you, you, you well the word came so it's established the question is it's a dubious prophecy establishing a dubious apostleship and so there are two tracks running in our generation side by side, the dubious and the real and I can't help on the basis of my experience in the life of then Israel believing that the real must have this organic context of the body of a rightly related people and that the offices of God, prophetic and apostolic will have their nurture, origin and oversight and security in such a context and that I'm suspicious of

any that do not we're not told but we know that there's the school of the prophets in Elijah's time and that Elijah and both Elisha were evidently the head or central prophetic entities of those schools but the word school, collegium which we interpret in our modern day lexicon as being a place of instruction is more properly translated community, they were not a school in the academic sense, they were people living together as a body and as a community with the central personality and if my own experience is any measure, I would have to say that before Elijah is set forth before the world and before Ahab out of obscurity, he's had a thorough dealing with God in the college, in the community of that prophetic assemblage whose whole purpose is to guard and safeguard and bring to fruition

that calling when he acts, he acts as a man by himself, he's on the stage of history but what preceded that act is the whole history that God does not relate to us in which the shade is drawn but I have to believe he's not an isolated phenomenon we have to speak the truth of God despite every appearance to the contrary for those appearances are false and the word of God is true, you've got to believe that and it's so alive in you as the truth that it's more compelling than the thing which is seen how do you come to that? not in a three month school that's going to produce profits but in a lifetime of the Lord's training and raising

you up and in the degree that you receive the correction that comes from those with whom you're related did the bell ring?

No okay, I'm not hearing it for some reason it is getting late yeah, I'm finished it started late well he's quoted two philosophers Nietzsche and and Kierkegaard now he quotes Luther speaking about prayer of the total inability of even the most people, the most pious to pray, praying like preaching has got to be a divine function but we can perform it humanly and more often than not we do and Luther said people want to be like God and don't want to subject their thoughts to God but place them alongside God as if they were his equal if we allow our prayers their prominence over and against what God would have prayed through us, it's a statement of a presumptuous kind that our prayer is as good as his that's what Luther's saying to attack the confident prayers that are considered pious in

which the pious man the religious man strives to rise out of the depth and forgets how distant from the living God he is in his weakness and enmity this presumption tries to draw God out into human purposes and desires if you go on like that and praying your prayers you're bending God to the accommodation of your will your petition, your desire, your want that's what it becomes he becomes an errand boy to do our thing and we're plying him with petitions so as to get him to perform them what does that make of God himself when we have reduced him to errand boy false prayer like false preaching can be a trap and prayer which is a verbal exercise like preaching needs to be reconsidered and seen with a new eye as being a remarkable statement that has as much right to be born of God as anything

as we proclaim as a message prayer is a holy function and we have not cheapened it by glib things that we can say that are technically correct and right because we've not waited or trusted or believed that the God who is an intercessor who neither slumbers nor sleeps and lives to make intercession for the saints can make them through us so it's a whole dimension of prayer that Luther picked up on that we need to include in speaking about words whether proclaimed as message or spoken as prayer but that the spirit of God who helps us in our weakness is no stop gap for the moment but the creator spirit in whom and through whom God alone accomplishes what man can never bring about by himself real prayer the prayer that opens the heavens, the prayer that brings something effectual into the

earth and these kinds of prayers are groanings and sighs that are too deep for words because they cannot find expression in the realm of that which is human and religious it has to issue out of the death of that out of the weakness and the recognition that our prayers are inept if we're not praying by the spirit everything begins in a person's inmost being here the renewing power of the world which God rules enters the heart alters the plans and ideas, transforms speech and points everything toward the future toward the end he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the spirit because the spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God we start with preaching, we come to prayer and then we come to this role of the spirit of God who is God and if we go off in

some cheap substitute for any of these things we need not that reality but if we're in for the reality of the true word preached, the true prayer prayed we must inevitably recognize our total dependency on God by his spirit if a prophet is anything he is essentially the man of the spirit and if the church is anything prophetically it is the church of the spirit and we cannot ignore this tremendous difficulty which the statement poses for our own self-assured religiosity everything depends on a right understanding of this statement if theology used this statement as a starting point new insights would be gained for all areas of thought which could not only be brought into question but would have to be condemned as fundamentally in error this theology of the Holy Spirit overturns all

hermeneutical homiletical thinking it overturns what you understand the way scripture is to be understood it overturns what you think preaching ought to be proclamation can only have authority where life takes on ever and always a renewing new direction in response to the Holy Spirit of God that's the final statement and I'm glad that the Lord has enabled me to get it in we charismatics we Pentecostals are most to be condemned for we have trafficked in the Holy Spirit of God and made him a kind of an article for our use and corrupted that which is holy so I love the Hebrew Ruach Hakodesh the spirit of holiness that's not to be our employment but God's provision and must be a way to speak true words to God's people they must be spirit birth words spirit born words or we are just speaking

our own words however correct the last analysis if we're going to take this seriously we must be the people eminently of the spirit not just in the moments of our acute need but in all of our moments that requires devotional time with the Lord that requires the work of the cross that requires communion in his body and his blood that requires a communion that's authentic because we're rightly related with others with whom we're taking it he's a holy spirit and he's a dove who will flee if he'll not find an appropriate place for his feet so Lord precious God on high forgive us we have been the worst abusers we have merchandised in the things that are holy we have merchandised in speaking we've been hot shots and bumptious or clever we've sent out a lot of words my God but your church is

dying for malnutrition it's wasting away it's confused and it's deformed it's marriages are failing it's children are going askew going awry because the word of God the corrective, life-giving, growing thing has not been sent so we're asking my God for this revival the word of God revived prophetically that affects something, that brings change that brings the reality of God to bear for the very word is not only the proclamation but the event itself and so we have fallen very short of this and we ask my God your forgiveness the washing of your blood where we have trafficked where we have taken you lightly where we have played games where our own reputation or conceit or response from men has been the higher priority than obedience to the word that would have been painful or misunderstood

Lord, precious God help us to drink again from that river that holy stream that flows from under the throne of the temple my God for to be correct is not correct enough if we have not the gush the force, the power the indefinable reality and quality that your spirit is if it's to be a life-giving word confrontive convicting, powerful for change so my God wash us because you'll not come into an uncleansed vessel and where we have trafficked my God forgive us birth in us a new esteem for the word of God by the spirit of God for our world is dying everywhere around us upon our ears even as we speak and the church has not been the statement of sanity and reality that would have saved it oh Lord help precious God raise up that which is authentically prophetic and authentically apostolic for

there are men today fully sincere and utterly persuaded that what they are about is that what is organizational rather than

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