

The Agony and the Ecstasy of Paul in Romans 9-11

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the mystery of Israel and the church, which is at the heart of Paul's apostleship and the church's purpose.

Duration: 1:11:42

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 9:3, Romans 11:9, Romans 11:23, Romans 11:32-36, Revelation 12:12

Topics: "God's Chosen People"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding and reflecting on the destiny of the church and the nation. He acknowledges that discussing this topic requires more time than what is available, but hopes to convey the theme in a way that will deeply impact the listeners. The speaker highlights the significance of the subject of Israel, even for Asian Christians, as it was central to the apostle Paul's teachings. He urges the audience to move beyond a mediocre and predictable religious life and embrace the ultimate sacrifice and determination required for the glory of God.

Transcript

Praise the Lord. Good morning, dear saints. If I look in any way fresh, it's a deception.

I'm altogether crumpled, tired, uninspired, uninstructed, feeling and finding my way, and yet cherishing this final occasion, I can't tell you how deeply, not to miss the mind of the Lord in any particular. The issue is not to find what is good, but to find what is perfect. There are a lot of good things, tested, given things, but what is the appropriate and intended word for the conclusion of these days, as if it were once and for all and will not be given again? You would think that for that a man would need a full night's sleep.

The marvel is, if I've had any, but that there's a necessity that I would stand before you in a kind of crumpled condition, because I can tell you that when you'll be called upon to give a climactic final moment of utter and eternal significance, you're not going to feel any better than I'm feeling presently, and you'll have to be obedient in the want of vim and vinegar, strength and inspiration that you think you ought to have to the uttermost, because the moment is so critical, but you'll have at least. You'll have to be obedient in your weakness. And so I'm required, as prophetic man, not only to speak, but to demonstrate the thing to which you yourself are called.

Got that picture? So even here, we're talking in the car, what shall be said and how shall we conclude and what text. And I'm not even sure now, though I'm moments away from having to open my mouth. So Lord, our confidence is in you.

If we're jealous for this conclusion, for this finale, as if it will never again be our privilege, what ought to be spoken, Lord, in your so great wisdom, who alone knows the end from the beginning, you know the destiny, my God, of the church and this expression in this city and in this nation. What ought to be spoken, Lord, and how? Come, have all the more opportunity to express yourself, because I'm in a condition of weakness, because my mind is fuzzy, because I can't humanly put it together. Exhibit, my God, your wonderful grace, that resurrection power and life for which these children will be called to fulfill in their weakness what it is that you're setting before them in mine.

We thank you for the mystery of it and your provision through it and your wonderful grace as one who has gone before in exactly this way, for you are crucified in weakness. So we thank you and give you praise for this conclusion now, Lord. Let every word be a sword and a dagger, every piece of punctuation, your accent, your voice, the disposition of your heart and mind, that nothing, my God, will fall to the ground.

We'll cherish it, we promise, and thank you for the privilege of it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it would almost be criminal to have passed through these days and not one time to speak to you out of Romans 11.

Are you aware what Romans 11 signifies for the Apostle Paul? It is his very heart. Are you aware what the Book of Romans signifies for the Apostle Paul? It is the most systematic statement of his whole apostolic creed, of his whole perception of the faith and of reality. The Book of Romans is classic beyond all estimation, and scholars have rightly said that chapters 1 through 8 are the preliminary for 9 through 11, which is the heart, and that 12 through 16 is the aftermath, the working out, the application of what is spoken as the centerpiece, which is Romans 9 through 11, the subject of the mystery of Israel and the church.

Can you imagine what a statement it is of God's wisdom that the church that is Gentile would take to its heart this great burden and this great mystery, not just as an aspect of its consideration or concern, but the very heart of its purpose, call, and being? That a Gentile church should be preoccupied with the destiny and fate of a Jewish nation is a remarkable statement to the principalities and powers of the air who preside over mankind in that premise that men are only goaded and provoked by their self-interest and will only seek what pertains to themselves, their pleasure, their security, and all the rest. God wants to bring that false wisdom down, not only to contradict it but only to destroy it, because it has made of captive nations and races of men who live for number one, for themselves, their security, their self-interest, their satisfaction, as an unspoken premise that this is the principle for life, that if you have any kind of reason, you know that you take care of number one first, and if you have anything left over, you might consider a bit of philanthropy and altruism. But God contradicts all that and says that the utterness of the divine wisdom is a consideration other than yourself, contrary to yourself, that not only does not promote your self-interest but threatens it.

And so I can tell you with confidence, anyone who will take up Paul's burden of the mystery of Israel through the church in the last days makes himself a special candidate for suffering. The powers of darkness will hate this determination on your part, not only because you're Gentile but because you're Chinese, because you're Oriental, because you're Asian, which is to say you're the least ones from whom

anyone would expect some kind of identification with that Semitic people in the other part of the world whose representative is standing before you. Why should you have any affinity for the Jew, any interest in the destiny of that nation, all the more when its track record stinks, when the Lord himself acknowledges that you have blasphemed my name in every nation where I have sent you, where I have cast you in judgment, and now in these last days you're even doing it in the land that you presently occupy, and you'll continue to do it until I bring that final last day sifting a judgment by which the great majority of you will not survive and the remnant will constitute the redeemed nation who returns to Zion with everlasting joy upon their heads, sighing and mourning, passing away.

So will you take my word for it, you dear saints? I know that this is a strange subject. You're not acquainted, but I want to introduce it. I want, by the grace of God, to sound a theme.

There's no way that we can begin to develop this. This takes a three-, five-day seminar at least to dwell upon this and draw this out. What I'm hoping for in the brevity of time, which means shortness, that the theme will so be sounded that it will ruin you, that it will haunt you.

It will come back into your thought, your consciousness, Israel. Why should we be preoccupied? It's as distant and as remote a subject and a concern as could ever be put before us as Asian Christians. And yet, if we don't take it up, we will contradict the very mystery that was at the heart of the great apostle's consideration, that to remove this from Paul is to remove Paul.

And what are we if we do not reflect and take to our heart what was central to him? What is the church if it's not built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets? So we want to probe and feel and identify and grasp what pulsed in this great apostle's heart. What was given to him as revelation over which he was a steward of the mystery? And nowhere else does he say, Brethren, my desire is that you should not be ignorant of this mystery lest you become wise in your own conceit. There's no other place where he warns that the loss of the mystery will have any negative consequence except here.

To lose this mystery, not to obtain it, opens you to consequences that are undesirable and change and threaten the entire character of the church itself. He said, I would not have you to be ignorant of this mystery lest you become wise in your own conceit. Something pompous, something inflated, some swelling up of your Christian egotism will necessarily follow the absence of the lack of this mystery.

This mystery is calculated to temper you, to humble you, to bring you into a sense of God in the majesty of his mind and will because Paul ends this remarkable statement in Romans 11 with three verses that are the most magnificent, poetic paean of praise to God stated anywhere in the whole corpus of the Bible, Old or New Testament. There's no greater ecstatic statement that stretches language to breaking than Paul's spontaneous eruption at the end of his final statement in Romans 11. Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

The man is staggered. He is reeling. His breath fails him.

Oh, the depth of the riches. What has he seen that he would exclaim something so ecstatically that it defies language to comprehend? Who has been his counselor? Who has given to him? And it shall be given again for of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be glory forever. You dear saints, if you trifle with this, if you think that Paul is employing only a little piece of flourish and rhetoric, some stylistic thing to end his remarkable statement in Romans 11 with the glory of God forever because it has a nice lofty sound, you are condemned.

You're shortchanging God. You're crippling yourself. You're losing the heart and nub and genius of apostolicity itself is the issue of the glory of God forever.

Don't you understand? And then if we miss what Paul is saying and why he's ecstatic and why he concludes like that, we turn the word glory into a piece of traffic. We make it a little piece of convenient verbalism that we can write, put into our choruses, our songs, talk, pray, but we don't know what it means. It doesn't pierce us through.

We don't understand the ultimacy of the word glory, which is at the heart of church that is church. Its very purpose for being beyond any and every other consideration of any benefit that it derives from believing is the purpose pertaining to the glory of God. If I can only make that point, if I can only sink that home, if I can only drive it into your corporate consciousness and into your deeps, I will heave a sigh of relief and fear that I have discharged my obligation toward you.

A church that is not jealous for the glory of God is ipso facto not the church. It can call itself that. It can have services and programs and all the rest, but it has lost its apostolic distinctive.

It has lost its reason for being. And how do we understand this? The glory of God? The phrase itself defies every concept. We can't even summon humanly an understanding, let alone an appropriation of a phrase like the glory of God forever.

So I want to tell you flat out that there's no way that you can even aspire to it or consider it unless it is given you by the grace of God. Isn't it a remarkable contradiction that we can't live for the jealousy of the glory except that God himself communicates something of the substance and spirit and meaning of that word, that we're dependent upon him even to catch some sense of the thing which is to be central to our own reason for being. That's why he says, for of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be glory forever.

I'm pleading with you to wrestle with that, that Paul is not just going on a flight of fancy and getting poetic to bring a nice lofty sounding conclusion to a great epistle. This is the heart, the genius of what is apostolic because it recognizes that the remarkableness of our call, the ultimacy is so beyond our ability even to understand it, let alone to fulfill it because it's of him. It's not from our cats or any man.

However clever this is of him, this mystery that no man could have conceived that there is a relationship in God's wisdom between the Jewish people, that nation that is despised, and even now stirring the hatred of the world toward it, which will increase in torrents. It will be an anti-Semitic inundation worldwide. They will be the most hated and despised of all peoples like the Lord before them.

And you're going to be identified with them in those last days? It'll threaten your future. It'll mock you. It'll make you an object for persecution because whoever hates them and wants to drive them into the sea and to obliterate them once and for all and blame them for every malady and failure of world and society will bring upon you some measure of that same vitriolic hatred as upon them if you are seen to be in any way sympathetic toward them or identifying with them or willing to extend yourself for them when they are universally hated and despised and looked upon as the enemies of mankind.

Got the picture? That you should yet be willing to suffer that risk and counter-privilege to identify with the people who in no way have ever done anything for you for which you have received the benefit and yet you're willing at the sacrifice and peril of your own life and family to be so identified with them whom you

have never even seen in the flesh? That's a mystery. That's an extraordinary phenomenon that can only be understood out of the counsels of the wisdom of God which Paul, being the apostle that he is and the steward of his mysteries, has seen. Not to see it, dear saints, is to condemn us to charismatica, is to condemn us to predictable services oriented for our enjoyment, our pleasure.

They're good. It's biblical. It brings a dimension of something that is desired, but it falls short of the glory.

For of him, this mystery, only God could have conceived it in the divine mind, this reciprocal relationship between not only two different kinds of people, but peoples who have been in historic enmity throughout the whole chronicle of the ages, the Jew and the Gentile. I know you don't know anything about that. Will you take my word for it? That I grew up as a Jewish boy in a Jewish home with a Jewish mother who, when she was a kid in London, England, and they had to take swimming, her Gentile teacher threw her into the pool and said, Sink or swim, you fat Jew.

My mother in her 90s still remembered that and never forgave that Gentile insult. Jews carry with them a history of the enmity of the Gentile world against them. Where have they been safe? In what nation in the world where there have been aliens and cast out? At what moment would the bottom fall out, even when they achieve a measure of security? And then suddenly something turns, as in Germany, and they become the object for annihilation.

You can't understand how deep and savage has been the history of enmity, fear, suspicion between Jews and the Gentile world. And yet God says in his mystery that there's a necessary relationship between a Gentile church and this people, so necessary that if you don't enter it consciously and willfully, even though there are a few Jews in your midst to whom you can demonstrate this presently, you forfeit the possibility of the fulfillment for yourself as church. The issue of what you are as church is altogether related and totally identified with this people.

You cannot even understand yourself as church or fulfill your purpose as church if you have not the consciousness of the intended relationship with that people. Nor can they come to the fulfillment of God's intention for them, independent of you. And that's humbling for any Jew who wants to make it alone and independent and show himself morally and in every way superior.

God in his wisdom has created these differences that requires a reconciliation, a union, an identification, which only he can affect. He calls us to the impossible. With man this is impossible, but with God? So then why, cats, are you bursting your jugular vein to communicate this if it's but God? Do we just lean back and sit and wait for the magic of his performance? No.

There's a required participation of a conscious, willful kind. It's an agreement to pay for this and sacrifice, because what is the first verse after Romans 11? Brethren, therefore, I beseech you, make of your bodies a living sacrifice as an altogether proper worship unto the Lord. What is that? What is he saying? This is not going to be fulfilled by sitting on our haunches.

This is going to require ultimate sacrifice, which is your proper service, or it cannot be fulfilled. How many times have I used now already the word ultimate? How many times have you ever used it? I would bet dollars to donuts, American idiom, that there's hardly a soul in this room who has ever once breathed the word ultimate or has spoken about ultimacy. And yet the prophetic heart cries out for that word especially, because if we will not be ultimate in the intention of God, we will be predictable, ordinary, mundane, mediocre.

And that is a contradiction in terms, because unto him be glory in the church, not mediocrity. Got the picture? You would sink into a necessary mediocrity of predictability of religion as a Sunday addendum where your first purpose is really the success of your career and the attainment of your education and the finding of a wife or a husband and having family and a nice home and car, et cetera, et cetera. You would necessarily go the way of all flesh if God in his mercy had not just called you to religion, but to ultimacy, to things beyond your ability that requires an ultimate sacrifice, an ultimate determination, an ultimate understanding, an ultimate jealousy for the glory of God, which itself is an ultimate subject.

And the heck of it is this. You can't even perform that by yourself. It is of such a nature and kind that it requires corporate fulfillment or no fulfillment at all.

That's why he had you out here on the floor the other night, you young ones, because unless you are incorporated in those purposes and come early to the recognition of the ultimacy of your call and destiny in him, we older ones cannot fulfill it without you. We're in something together. Those that believe we're together is more than being alongside each other in chairs, looking up at a platform and enjoying the service.

The whole issue of the church is the issue of this mystery, its comprehension and its fulfillment, which is of him. But if it's of him, it must necessarily be through him. Dum-da-dum-dum.

All of your well-meaning intention, all of your brittle ability, well-meaning, clever. You did well in school. Now you'll do well in church.

You'll fulfill this mystery out of your capability. No way. This is so requiring, so ultimate that has been conceived of him that it can only be fulfilled through him.

That's why I'm in my crumpled condition this morning, because the speaking itself of the mystery cannot issue out of human expertise and ability, not even human energy. It's got to be through him, or not at all. Even the proclamation of the mystery, the setting forth of it, has got to be through him, through his life, through his power, through the resurrection reality, which is at the heart of the whole genius of the faith, and not just the expediency by which Jesus was removed from his tomb and elevated to the right hand of God.

Resurrection through him, which means that you are now under obligation to move from the mere acknowledgment of the truth of resurrection as doctrine to the appropriation of resurrection, as the Germans have a good word, they always do, the *ursprung*, the motivation, the animation, the spring of life itself. But I know that I know there's hardly one of you in the room that have ever tasted that reality, though you thought you had done God's service by acknowledging the truth of it as doctrine. You've got to live through the resurrection.

You've got to live through that life, through that power, through its enablement, which is given all the more opportunity in weakness, which is to the human flesh, humiliating. Everything that is human in us wants to strive on the basis of our ability, our strength, our clarity, our clear-headedness. We've got it together.

God will never allow the greatness of his mysteries to be fulfilled, even so much as in an iota from that which springs out of man himself. With man, it is impossible. That's why it's to the glory of God, you dear saints, that he should triumph in the fulfillment of this extravagant vision to resurrect a nation being brought to a death as the consequence of its own sinful rejection of its own God, the breaking of its own

covenants, that has every reason to be forsaken of God and cast away and discredited.

That's why the first question that Paul takes up in Romans 11, has God cast away his people whom he has foreknown? The church thinks that he should have, but every reckoning they've had their opportunity and blown it. Now let the church take over and be the Israel of God. He says, God forbid that you should think that.

That would be your natural tendency to replace Israel as if they're finished and have had their chance and have blown it and have full opportunity because that's total human worldly reasoning. But God is God when he extends mercy to whom he will extend mercy, not because they're deserving, but all the more because they are undeserving. Because what does mercy mean? It's not something that is obtained on one's merit.

It's exactly to those who have no merit, have no deserving, because when God extends mercy, he's being who he is in himself. I am that I am, and I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy. I will elect whom I will elect.

And the way in which I show myself in the utter sovereignty of my own will that can never be conditioned by man or by need is by choosing a nation which least deserves this consideration. And in that do I display the genius of who I am as I am that I am. And if I can do this with Jews, with Israel that has blasphemed my name in every nation, failed again and again in covenant faithfulness, and even now a totally secular nation that is not even willing to consider me in view of their impending destruction, then there's hope for any people and any nation anywhere.

The issue of Israel is the issue of God, and it's the issue of the communication of that which alone can be hope for the nations who will observe both Israel's judgment, uprooting, casting out, and restoration and return by the mercy of God. That's why he says in Romans 11, by your mercy they may obtain mercy. How many of you, dear precious Chinese saints, have mercy to extend? Where will you find it? It's not a commodity.

It's not an abstract aspect of our credo. But there's got to be a palpable, substantial mercy, which is the very character of God exuded by Chinese, Singaporean, Asian saints to Jews who will be coming into your midst in greater numbers than you can ever imagine, who have been uprooted from nations elsewhere in the world and will find their way here somehow in the mystery of God, because he says in Amos chapter 9, I will sift you through all nations, and not the least of the reason for that sifting is to sift you. What will you do if you will find them in your midst, uprooted, disheveled, unkempt, cast out, broken in spirit, absolutely disheveled and not knowing what hit them, because when it comes, it will come suddenly.

And what are they doing in your part of the world? How did they get here? By some process of God. God knows. He said, I will sift you through all nations, so that in the day of my judgment, I will separate in the nations the sheep and the goats.

Over one question, what did you do with the least of these, my brethren? I want to announce in whatever measure of authority I have, as a prophetic servant of the Most High, that this will be your test. This will not be an abstraction, and it will come in your generation and your time. The conditions for it are already working, and it is at the door.

They themselves don't know it. There's going to be an upheaval of a kind that could hardly be imagined after the Nazi Holocaust that will eclipse the Nazi Holocaust and bring a devastation greater than that by which six million Jews were systematically annihilated in Europe. But now the extent of this, of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 24, that there's coming a trouble for the nation, such as exceeds anything that they have ever previously known nor will again know.

And if that time were not cut short, no flesh will survive. But for the elect's sake, for the surviving remnant, that time will be cut short, whatever that means. I want to tell you, if I know anything, if I am anything in God, that is future, but it's a near future.

And I think the only thing that prevents its eruption now is your unpreparedness. Everything is in place for Jewish catastrophe, but the church is not yet ready to receive them and to extend mercy that they may obtain mercy because the church only knows mercy as a category, only as an abstraction, only as an article of faith. It does not know it substantially as a palpable reality, so how can it extend it? You know what's happening to me right now with my headache and condition? I'm experiencing the mercy of God.

Can you see it? I should be in bed or some other place where you put old withering men. But if you're receiving anything and it's so critical that you will or you will be doomed to being just another expression of church as it is conventionally known, but performing it a little better than your neighbor. God has a greater destiny for you or I would not be here.

I would be someplace else. I'm here because his eye is upon you, because he has seen the investment, the preparation, the intention, because you're ready and prepared for a word now by which you can come of age. God forbid that you should only be a successful Christian work.

God forbid. He has greater intention than that, you dear saints, that touches the issue of forever. How does Paul end? That of him, through him, and to him are all things to whom be glory forever.

So I don't know about you Chinese, because there's something about ancestor worship. Are you better prepared than Caucasians, than Occidental, to understand eternity of things that lie beyond time, beyond the present moment, and that the present moment, though it seems so engaging and so total, is only a transient thing and a time of preparation for that which is eternal? No? Brother Ott, you sound like you're right out of the Middle Ages. Isn't that what they thought, that this life is a veil of tears and a time of preparation, and it's all for that which is future and eternal? Yes, and they were right.

It's you moderns who are all wrong. You've bought a bill of goods from the wisdom of the world that has its origin from the pit, that says this life is what it's all about. Success now, your life, you only live once, your marriage isn't happy? Well, dump her and try, try again, because there's only the one life that you have now.

This is the now generation, instant. Boy, have you been deluded. So the word forever needs to come into your consciousness, not just as a category, but as a pulsating, central consideration that brings the now moment into its present perspective that is appropriate in God's sight.

Or else you will be slaves, victims, jerked, manipulated, palpitating for a Toyota or something even a little better. Why not? This is only the one life. And how is it measured and how is it satisfactions obtained? By what you possess, what you own, what you use.

The only thing that will free you from the power of now is the consideration of that which is eternal. You'll never be a great expression of the body of Christ until eternity has come into your heart, as pastor himself spoke and prayed this morning. And how do you obtain it, even the consciousness of it? Only in conjunction with the mystery of Israel and never independent from it or apart from it.

God in his wisdom has locked you in. You're doomed to be merely charismatic and only successful unless you take into your deepest consideration what Paul took into his, the mystery of Israel and the church in the last days. You cannot be eternally minded and glory forever conscious independent of that mystery.

It's all wrapped up together. He'll not allow you to have it separately except as vocabulary. But if you're going to have it actually and existentially, it's only in conjunction where he has set the mystery himself.

Am I getting too fancy? Sorry about that. But you'll have the tape to ponder and the pastor and others to elaborate the foundational premises that must come to you through prophetic man because it has to do with your foundations. Well, let's begin with the beginning of Paul's great mystery, chapter 9, just to show you the remarkable sweep of this that ends with an exclamation of unparalleled praise.

We need to begin where Paul begins with unparalleled sorrow. You think this is accidental? You think Paul plotted this? No, he was only writing to the church at Rome. He never thought it would be in the Bible.

And not only is it in the Bible, but it's a text central to the consideration of the church of every age and every location, especially the church of the last days. Are you that church? Are you last days conscious? Do you think that we're moving toward the end, the consummation of the ages? Are you expecting apocalyptic fury of the powers of darkness who know they have but a short time and will ventilated in the earth and seek to destroy this people? Why? Because if this people succeeds after ages-long apostasy of a return to Zion and to the God of Jacob, then the king who is contained in the heavens in Acts 3.21, waiting for the restoration of all things spoken by the prophets since the world began, is released to be the king at Zion on the holy hill, where God says, I have set my king on the holy hill of Zion, and I've given him the nations and the heathen for his inheritance. Where am I quoting? Psalm 2, the great eschatological psalm that speaks of a very literal kingdom and rule in the one place in earth where it is appointed, which we would not ourselves have chosen.

And that one place is Zion. That one place is Israel, not as it is presently constituted, but as it will be when the Lord will restore them and renew covenant with them in an everlasting way and give them his Holy Spirit and forgive them their iniquities in the day of their restoration after they have been rescued and saved out of death by the mercy that they have received through you. Isn't it remarkable? Just as there's no greater exclamation of praise, they call it a paean, p-a-e-a-n of praise.

And at the end of Romans 11, 33 through 36, and if you provoke me, I'll sing it. That will be memorable. But isn't it remarkable? That's something that ends with this ecstatic statement that where Paul is beside himself in joy in the depth and riches of what he has seen of the wisdom and knowledge of God because he has seen something more than Israel's own restoration.

What has he seen that makes him flip out? He has seen the transfiguration of the church, a bride prepared for the bridegroom through the conditions that will bring the church to its final maturity and preparedness for its own eternal destiny as the bride of the Lamb by the crisis brought to it through Israel. Don't get scared. I'm not expecting you to understand me, but I am under obligation to speak this.

Later on, it will come into your consciousness and into your understanding. Now you can just look bewildered. This is the prophetic predicament, which itself is a suffering and a cross and a form of death because what speaker does not want to be gratified by being understood? But after 40 years, I still have a wife who is scratching her head.

And what kind of husband has she got who never wanted to marry a preacher? And if she had to, why can't you tell jokes like the others? So there's always a necessary suffering that precedes a glory. But we need to give at least a few moments the remarkable way in which Paul opens the heart of the Book of Romans for which everything now from chapter 1 through 8 was preparation and now commences the elaboration of the great mystery from 9 through 11 and ends with this ecstatic outburst of praise. But it begins with the most pathetic cry of sorrow for his people to the point where he would wish himself accursed.

I say the truth in Christ. I'm not playing acting. I'm not putting on a performance.

I'm not getting dramatic, Paul is saying. I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost. God knows he's looking upon me.

I'm not affecting something. I'm not getting sentimental schmaltzy. I'm not getting emotional for effect.

This is deep in my apostolic consciousness and needs to be so in ours that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh. Listen, dear saints. Unless the issue of Israel begins with this cry, the rest cannot follow.

There cannot be the great climax or the depth of the riches of joyous exclamation unless it begins with the depth of the sorrow. And this saves you from shallowness. You're such candidates for shallowness like I've not seen anywhere.

What is it about you in this Singaporean culture and civilization for which I am the antithesis that is calculated for your shallowness, for your reduction, to make you either objects of commerce and trade, employment to fit into the economy? As I was being told yesterday, so many places for those who become engineers or lawyers or doctors according to the need of the society. I said, how many Singaporean students take liberal arts as their major, philosophy, English, literature, ethics, morality? I'll bet there's not one in 10,000 who would mispend a university education for the luxury of a subject realm that has nothing to do with personal success. You're on a train, you're on a track, you're being groomed for use, for exploitation, to fit into the economy, to produce it and to buy it.

And shallowness aids in that purpose. It's a society that doesn't want you to be reflective and contemplative, let alone that you should experience sorrow. It may mean that you'll not be effective on the job, or your computer will get gummed up.

I'm almost saying, hey, better than this, return to Confucius. Better that you should become shallow Christians, at least become Confucian in an attention to philosophy, if it will save you from inevitable shallowness. God didn't call you to be one-dimensional cutouts, papier-mâché saints.

He's called you to reveal his glory in the breadth, which is of God himself, in our emotion and our thought, and our conduct. So it's no accident that the great apostle begins with the deepest expression of sorrow, which isn't pleasant to experience. Or you say, well, that's Paul.

Of course he's Jewish. Of course he's going to feel sorrow for his own kinsmen according to the flesh, but that saves me from any necessity because I'm not Jewish. See how simple you are? You think that Paul is crying out because he's Jewish.

You've not understood. He's crying out because he's apostolic. It's his apostolic heart that is full of sorrow for the condition of his people that he would wish himself accursed for those who happen to be his brethren, but he would be equally as grieved and sorrowful if it were pygmies that God had appointed to be the people of his choice and the fulfillment of his kingdom.

Am I threatening your insurance policy? Okay. I have fallen off of platforms. Listen, you dear saints, are you following me? If you have no intention for apostolic reality, if you're content with mere religiosity, I'll shut up right now.

Why listen to this spectacle unless you have an intention that is ultimate? It'll save you from being merely Chinese and Singaporean. Ultimacy will save you from being one-dimensional, predictable cutouts who say the right thing and sing the right thing but are not the right thing. This is not going to be a sending nation and the Antioch to the world and to Asia unless there are those who can be sent from a sending body.

That's the genius of the word apostolosis, sent ones, but not sent from predictability or mediocrity or ordinariness, sent from a vibrant community of believers who are jealous for the glory of God and have taken to their hearts a mystery for which there's no natural explanation that they should even be interested, let alone absorbed. There'll be no sending. There'll be no Holy Spirit saying separate unto me unless you have come to a reality of a kind that Paul describes in his epistles and he was in himself.

For the apostolic man as the prophetic man is the thing in himself. It's not an affectation. It's not an overlay.

It's not a professionalism. It's not learning a new lingo, new vocabulary, new phrases to show yourself pert and clever. It's ultimate reality.

Do you know why? Because the high priest of our confession is also our apostle. He's the chief apostle of our confession because he's also the high priest. And his glory is when he is replicated and expressed in the corporate body that shows forth the same mercy, magnanimity, breadth of understanding, jealousy for the will of the Father, the glory of God unto sacrifice, unto death.

It's his intention through the church. I'm almost wanting to say, if you have no heart for this, please leave now. Let's not clog up the works with too many bodies.

Let's reduce the church to the church that is the church, God's remnant people who are serious about his glory and honor and name and know that it's got to cost something. The loss of career, the loss of marriage, the loss of body life, who knows what and what form. The last days are going to be tumultuous in the clash of kingdoms.

There will be casualties. Martyrdom is not the rarity of something that falls upon a few that we cluck our tongues and heave a sigh of relief, it's not me. Martyrdom is the normative intention of God for all the church.

If the church is not a martyr church, it's not the church. It doesn't matter how we actually end our lives. Martyrdom is not a conclusion that comes unhappily in a way that we would try to avoid.

It's the logic of a life lived in a certain way that is sacrificial and martyr in its very composition, mentality, and genius. Lord, Lord, grace, grace, Lord, that my faith fail not. As I look out on these precious faces that are looking at me in unbelief like, what is that man saying? Here's what I'm saying.

You don't have to be Jewish to sorrow for Israel. It's not because Paul is Jewish that he's having this deep sense of grief. It's because he's an apostle.

He's expressing his apostolic heart, which is to say the heart of God. The apostolic heart is God's very heart of concern and anguish for this people. And if we'll not have it for them, for whom will we have it? Do I have to indict you as I did those German students a few days ago when my first statement was to them after hearing their Christian choruses and they got it all together? You lack a tragic sense of life.

I don't see in you any disposition to sorrow. You're shallow. The range of your emotion is happy, happy, happy, and maybe you'll have a bad day, but you don't know the depths of the anguish of soul of a Paul.

How then shall you be able to recite with meaning the glory of the conclusion or the depth of the riches? The two are profoundly connected. One is the beginning, the other the end. You cannot come to a place of joy without beginning in a place of sorrow.

Are you willing to know grief, pain, sorrow, the heart of God, which is painful to experience? But if you don't begin there, there'll be no ending of that kind. And it's the mystery of Israel that brings you in. This is your privilege.

This is the mystery itself to save you from being merely Singaporean. Can you see it? This is why the church is so distinctive an entity in the world because it expresses the range and magnificence of very God himself in its capacity both for pain and sorrow and grief and exclamation and joy and ecstatic reverence. That's living saints.

That range of response is living, and anything less than that is falling short of the intention of God for our humanity. And the heck of it is, as history shows, if we'll not come into the fullness of this apostolic intention, we will become instruments not of life but of death. The great nation of Germany, however unequal the level of its civilization, became the brutal, bestial engineers of factories of death through which Jews were passed.

Isn't that remarkable? That if we'll not be the one, we'll be the other? If we'll not extend mercy, we'll deprive them of mercy? If we'll not be larger than life, we'll be less than life? And it is all centered in one mystery, the issue of Israel, the Jew, the despised nation who have no sense of their own calling and don't even know that the gifts and callings of God, as Paul says in Romans 11, are irrevocable. They'll not be taken back. It's without repentance.

What does that mean? That God is obliged to fulfill it. That even though they want to be the Hong Kong of the Middle East, God has a greater intention to be a nation of priests and a light unto the world despite and against their own unwillingness even to consider such a destiny. Can he succeed with the people who are not even willing? Yes, because he's God, because he's powerful, and because he's willing to bring them down that he might raise them up.

Because he said to their father Abraham, that from your seed I'm going to form a people who will bless all the families of the earth. You think you're blessed now? You ain't seen nothing yet. When this nation will come into its destiny as a nation of priests and a light unto the world, it will disperse over the earth art catses in every place.

You call that blessing, brother? There is a quotient. There's a dimension you're receiving. You're too young and innocent, maybe too dumb to know it, but it's still being expressed.

So unique, you don't know how unique. After I'm gone, you'll appreciate it. Send me a note.

Now you're too young. Nevertheless, it's being expressed. We branches who have been broken off, Jewish atheist, ex-Marxist, radical, anti-God, were saved by the mercy of God because one of my students and her mother were praying for this atheist teacher.

And the hound of heaven pursued me for 14 months through Europe and the Middle East as I'm looking for philosophical and ideological answers for a broken life and revealing himself by every believer who picked me up off the side of the road and the one who put the New Testament to my hands, to which God gave me a revelation in the first reading. I'm grafted back into my own root saints. And Paul says, how much more when they, the natural branches, are grafted back into their own root and God is able to graft them in again.

You'll not appreciate that unless you realize that what Paul is saying when he describes you as wild branches that were grafted into our root. Did you know that? All you would have been capable of is chop suey places and, you know, commerce if you had not been grafted in. Now something new is flowing out of the sap of life from that root that gives you a larger vista for the use of your life than you would otherwise have had.

You would have been unhappily Chinese all too Chinese, human all too human. But now you're grafted in to a remarkable tree that has an Hebraic history. The patriarchs, the prophets, the psalmists, the apostles and whose roots are in God and the sap that issues from the roots and come up into the trunk and branches is the very life of God.

Or else you would be pathetic dum-dums. And I'll tell you what, you're only enjoying that life to the degree that you're not, that you're conscious that you've been grafted into somebody else's tree and you're grateful for the privilege. It will only flow to the degree of your acknowledgement and your gratitude.

But if you're only merely Christians who got saved and don't realize the dimensions of that salvation because salvation is of the Jews. How did you get into the act? The greatest, I always will remember my very first experience in Singapore years ago. I forgot what church it was.

Maybe you can identify it as I describe it. It was a large building and there were seven or eight hundred Chinese believers singing the praises of the God of Israel. I came undone.

Chinese people are celebrating my God and celebrating him with meaning and real devotion in a Hebraic way that would bless his soul to hear and does. And on the walls were the plaques commemorating the death of the missionaries that had come to Singapore. Mary Jones arrived 1903, died 1907, malaria.

John Smith arrived 1912, died 1915, malaria, yellow fever, typhus. There was a roll call of the death of missionaries who expended their lives that you should not be Chinese dum-dums and outside the

purposes of God and fitted only for commerce. But he brought you into his eternal purposes that you should not regret a misspent lifetime given over to servitude to things but called into the majesty of the knowledge of the God who is God, the creator of heavens and the earth, the God of Israel and of Jacob and to be the very salvific agent for their return.

For he is able to graft them back in again. If he was able to graft you in who were wild branches and fruitless, is he not able to graft them in who are natural? And when he does, Paul says, it will be nothing less than life from the dead, a nation of priests and a light unto the world. We are living beneath the intention of God in our own society.

That's why it's all commercial, why it's all things, why it has not an ethereal and spiritual content and richness is because a people who were called to bring you that priestly dimension are yet presently out of it. But Paul says, the great apostle, the gift and callings of God are irrevocable. If he has called them, let them spit out their guts, let them be more commercially minded than you and accomplished in every field other than their calling, I will restore them to the calling to which I've called them because I have spoken it, it is a promise and a call and if I do not fulfill it, how then am I God? And Paul says in verse 25, And so all Israel shall be saved, for the deliverer shall come out of Zion and take transgression from Jacob according to the covenant that I have made with them as it is written, when the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.

How can you read an apostolic statement and not choke and gasp and fall before the magnitude, the richness, who can understand it? Language, it stretches language to breaking that despite ages long apostasy, despite the fact that we Jews have turned to every other field and given the world Karl Marx and communism and Sigmund Freud and psychiatry and every kind of malicious alternative to the redemption of men in God through Christ, we're foremost subversives. Despite all that, God will restore us to our calling because the issue of the nations is at stake, including yours. You need a prophetic and priestly intrusion.

You need someone to blow the whistle on those things that you have accepted as normative and thought that that was life is all about. That comes from priestly men who see through the apparent things and whose hearts palpitate for the glory of God and know that there's a sinister world that conspires against truth, against reality, against eternity. This is the priestly function to show things as God himself sees them to those who would otherwise be mesmerized and live their lives fruitlessly in any kind of significance and die that way.

Your involvement in being the agents of Israel's restoration will bless all the families of the earth, including your own. But it won't be an easy and a cheap role for you to play. And you'll not play it at all unless you understand that what is at stake here is the issue of God's glory forever.

So I'm quoting as I'm being led out of Romans 11, and I just read the genius and heart of it. Verse 25, I would not, brethren, you should be ignorant of this mystery. Listen to you, dear Chinese saints.

Do you have a heart for mystery? Do you have a disposition for mystery? Or are you all factual, analytical, critical, mathematics and statistic oriented? That very preoccupation spoils and inures you against mystery. And yet the heart of the faith are the mysteries of which Paul was steward. And at least you should have a sensitivity, a disposition, an appreciation for mystery.

Or else how can you appreciate the prophetic man who speaks strangely and not systematically and is all over the landscape, saying this, that, and everything as he's being prompted? There's mystery. You need

a sense of mystery. There are things that lie too deep for words.

Things cannot be reduced to system. God forbid that that should characterize the church, that it's been reduced to system, to manipulation, as it so unhappily is everywhere. There's mystery.

There are things where you stop speaking, where you choke, where you splutter, where you can't go on, where you feel and don't know. You have to intuit and not analyze. Paul was the steward of mysteries.

You need at least to appreciate the word who says in apostolic authority, I would not rather you should be ignorant of this mystery. You can't afford to be ignorant of this one, lest you should be wise in your own conceit. You'll become inflated and pompous.

You'll say the kingdom now, you're going to take over society, you're going to replace Israel. All of these are presumptions of the vainest kind that not inevitably will follow those who do not know the mystery. The mystery saves you from what would otherwise be inordinate conceit and being puffed up.

Because if you become a puffed up and conceited church, you're no longer the church. You're no longer reflecting and revealing the character of God, who at its essence is humble. Learn of me, for I am lowly and meek.

The king shall come to you lowly and meek, riding on the back of an ass upon which never man sat. That's our king. He was born and came into a flesh, lay aside his deity, took upon the form of an infant that had to be breastfed and have his diapers changed.

Our God will reduce himself to that humiliation and live a life of obscurity and die as a criminal, the most painful, grotesque of all deaths, nakedly came into the world nakedly, went out of it nakedly. His whole life is a statement of the humility of God. What is the church that doesn't reflect that? The church that becomes pompous and inflated, and we've got it together and look at our numbers, look at our program, we're number one, we're this, we're that, is no longer the church that reflects him.

It's no longer the church. It's an institution. It's a culture.

It's a blessing society for itself. And that happens if you miss this mystery. This mystery is calculated to keep you humble because it shows that God has elevated a people to a place of prominence and significance over you, Israel, and has chosen as the center of his theocratic kingdom, not Singapore, which you would have thought hub of all the world, but Zion, the holy hill.

It's not even a mountain. It's a pimple. That's why he's chosen it, because he chooses the foolish things and the weak things to confound that which purports to be mighty and wise.

There's a drama here, saints. There's a statement that God is wanting to make of essential truth as he knows it that needs to come into all mankind through the fulfillment of this mystery that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles come in. Well, maybe I'll talk about that in part two at the next service.

But I can tell you this. It's not only numerical. It's also actual.

There's a fullness that is the key to Israel's restoration that must come to you, not just in number but in quality. And when it will come to you, you know what happens? You've lost your Asian cast of character, and you've become Hebraicized, not Judaized, Hebraicized. You've become like the sweet singers of

Israel.

You've become prophetic. You've become like the psalmist of old. You're infused with the things that are Hebraic of a special quality and kind that saves you from the narrowness of your own racial and genetic origin.

Not only you, but even we Jews need to come into that largeness and into that fullness which God himself infuses us as we take up his mystery. And when it comes, he will take care of Israel. Israel will not take care of herself.

She'll be down and out, incapable. And so it is written, Israel shall be saved, all Israel. There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, for this is my covenant with them when I shall take away their sins.

I don't even wait for their repentance. I will take the initiative. I will take away their ages-old transgression and sins, even the crucifixion of my son.

I don't even wait for them to understand or be sorry or repent. I will. I'll take the initiative.

So soon as the fullness of the Gentiles come in, I'll act upon Israel. So the issue of Israel is not Israel. The issue of Israel is you.

Your fullness. That's the mystery. And so Israel is delivered, and you've come to a place of the fullness, which is the whole purpose of your salvation.

Because when you exit this world and this life, it's not to play a harp on a cloud. It is to administer the kingdom that has come, and some of you will rule over five cities and some over ten, based on your excellence in this life and the maturity and disciplines that you yourselves have submitted. This is preparation, dear saints, for the eternal kingdom, which is a gift and a reward for the righteous, for which you need to be in conscious preparation.

God will have a restored nation, but he'll have an exalted church, glorified, and administering and overseeing from the heavenly realm, displacing those fallen angels, the administration of his theocratic rule over all creation. It will not come to it, except we're trained up by it, in embracing this mystery and giving ourselves to it by the mercies of God, as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, because we're jealous that his covenant should be fulfilled, that his promises should be fulfilled, that what is written should be fulfilled, because if God will not be fulfilled in the things which he has written and spoken and promised in covenant and in writing, how is he God? The issue of Israel's restoration is the issue of God as God. And how can we be the church and not be jealous over that fulfillment and give ourselves as living sacrifices to the attainment of it? So I want to pray for such a church here.

Lord, encourage my faith. I believe, help my unbelief. Everything in Singaporean society and Chinese ancestry, all that is Asian, is counter to the Hebraic genius of apostolic and prophetic faith.

They would have to be transcended. They would have to come out of themselves. They'd have to become larger than life.

They'd have to break the power of this world that wants to fit them into a system. And so many doctors, so many lawyers, so many accountants to fit the purposes of society and fall short of the purpose of God unto

glory forever. Lord, break that power.

Loose these captives. Give them ambitions and intentions beyond economic success and my own this and my own that, I, I, I, me, me, me. Let them be jealous for the glory of God that alone will liberate them from such a puny consideration to succeed merely at the level of profession.

Take their place in the anonymous sea of peoples who are fitted into a system in the world that has no eternal consequence whatever and is doomed for judgment and will pass away as dust. Lord, I bless this congregation. My God, use this foolish speaking, Lord.

My God, to awaken something, to stir them, to wake them from their sleep, to raise them out of their graves, to give them intentions greater than anything that they have ever considered and waits upon the consideration of that mystery alone, the issue of Israel and the church in the last days. Give them a heart for this, Lord. Open their understanding.

Bless their ministers and pastor as they seek and dwell upon these remarkable verses in Romans and are given the capability to expound and make them known. Ruin this people, Lord, by the magnitude of the mystery and that to which we're called as privilege and we thank you and give you praise in Jesus' name. And God's people said amen.

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