

The Christian Mindset - Part 2

by Art Katz

The Christian Mindset is a world view that sees God as the Lord of all creation and humanity as created to seek God, and it is essential to confront the secular mindset to live a life that reflects this mindset.

Duration: 1:03:38

Scripture: Acts 17:22

Topics: "Mindset"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the power of the Word of God and its ability to penetrate and bring transformation to communities. He acknowledges the opposition from the enemy but believes that God has a strategy for revival in the region. The speaker expresses his uncertainty about how to approach the secular world's wisdom but emphasizes the need to be prepared for a final confrontation. He highlights the clash between the mentality of the world and the mentality of the kingdom, using the example of Paul's writings. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the insufficiency of human beings and the need for God's empowerment in preaching the Word.

Transcript

In the life of Paul, that came about by happenstance, circumstantially, by a man who did not intend to be in Athens, who was really in flight from persecution, and was brought to the city by other men. He was not there by his own volition or choice. And while he was waiting for his brothers and the Lord to catch up with him, God began to stir his heart by his spirit, and step by step something unfolds, which becomes a jewel that is timeless in its importance and its value.

A confrontation or a collision between two essential forces or mentalities. One is Paul, the apostolic man, the Hebrew of the Hebrews, representing the mentality of God, and the other, the Greeks themselves. And not just any Greeks, but Athenians.

And not just Athenians, but philosophers, Stoics and Epiphyrians. In other words, the cream of the crop, the finest of Greek civilization, meets the finest of Hebrew or divine civilization. While the finest of the secular meets the finest of the sacred in a head-on collision.

And I want to say to you that when we read this, we need to read it not just as an academic exercise, we need to read it as a description for a course upon which we ourselves are set. Because what Paul represents as himself in Acts 17 is a statement of the church which he prefigures, and that what the end of

the age is going to be is yet another collision between an apostolic body meeting the world head-on in the depths of its wisdom in a final and ultimate confrontation for which we need now to be prepared. Are you following me? Okay.

So let's begin from verse 14 of chapter 17. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea, but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens, and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him, with all speed they departed.

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him.

And some said, What will this babbler say? Others some, He seems to be a set-aforth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, or Mars Hill, May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears. We would know therefore what these things mean.

For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription to the unknown God.

Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands. Neither is worship with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life and breath and all things, and hath made of one blood all nations of men.

For to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed in the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if happily they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being, as certain also of your own poets have said. For we are also his offspring.

For as much then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised them from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

So Paul departed from among them, howbeit certain men claimed unto him and believed, among the which was Dionysius an Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. Amen. So we're going to be pouring over this text, we're going to be sifting it, scrutinizing, analyzing, burrowing in, because it's enormous.

And I would just assume that most of us are guilty of the usual practice of too hurried or rapid reading of the Word. You cannot believe the treasures that are hidden in the few verses that I've read. What makes it

all the more marvelous is the complete unselfconsciousness of Paul.

He didn't take a deep breath and bring himself to his full height. He didn't recognize that this was some momentous confrontation that was going to be recorded for time and for eternity. It's simply something that happened, an event that came upon him unawares, which makes it all the more glorious, because what is struck and what is sounded is what Paul is through and through.

His thinking and what he expresses is not just convenient doctrine, it's something that is written into his very nature and being. And what he expresses in these brief words is a total philosophy, a world view, a global view, or if I can use the fancy word, a cosmology. From the word cosmos, it's a total view of the whole purpose of being, of creation, spoken to philosophers who did nothing else but spend their time in discussing and contemplating some new thing and never came to the end of their discussions.

The Bible speaks about those who are always seeking knowledge and always seeking the truth, never coming to the knowledge of it. And from those of us who have had background like this, particularly in the academic world, we know what that means. We always love to play with ideas.

We always like to discuss scintillating things, but we really do not have any real deep desire to be confronted or to be found by truth, the kind of truth that makes requirement. And in fact, if truth does not make requirement, if it is not costly, neither is it truth. So Paul understood these things, and what's recorded here is a sublime confrontation that is universal and timeless and valid in every generation and especially our own.

Because the Greek spirit, the spirit of humanism, the secular mind has been brought to such a full perfection and sway in our generation that not only does it pervade the world, it also pervades the church. Secular thinking describes not only the thinking of worldlings, it describes the thinking of those who profess to believe. And I mentioned two books last week.

I'll mention them again to those who are here for the first time, that you should put in your order and get them. I think them outstanding. They were a great influence and inspiration for me and have a great deal to do with the subject and our discussion.

By the same author Harry Blymeier is an Englishman. The first is *The Christian Mind*, and the thesis of this book is that though Christians use a spiritual vocabulary and have a spiritual mindset or a religious mindset on Sundays in terms of activity pertaining to the church, for all the rest of their week they are governed by a secular mindset. That is to say that they move by the same rhythm and the same logic, the same suppositions and assumptions by which the world itself conducts its business.

That indeed that there is a spiritual mind or a Christian mind or a biblical mindset which God did not intend to be confined to Sunday use, but to govern the life of believers. And that what we need to do is to contend for the faith that was once given, to find our way back to that mindset consciously, to see the clash of these two contrary and conflicting views and to live our life consciously in the biblical mindset that God intends for his people. The title of this other book is worth the price of the book alone, *The Secularist Heresy*, and the thesis of this book is this, that the very word secular is itself heretical.

You say, what do you mean by that? What he means by that is that there is nothing legitimate about the word secular. The world thinks so, but God never intended the distinction of secular and sacred. The whole of life was intended to be sacred.

The whole earth is to be pervaded with the glory of God. The principles of God and the commandments and the laws of God are to govern all men everywhere. Righteousness exalts a nation and not just the church.

So the very idea that we have allowed ourselves to submit or to subscribe to the idea that there is a sacred and a secular is itself a heresy. It's a distinction that should not exist. And part of our function as those who believe is to see that that distinction is dissolved and that the sacred comes into the secular, pervades it, finally captures it, and that the whole earth is permeated with the knowledge of God.

Okay, Paul believed that. We need to believe it also. Paul is not confronting religious men.

That is to say, a church in my cell is confronting secular men. He's confronting not the apostasy of the church, he's confronting the apostasy of the world. And we need to know, this is part of the spiritual mindset, that the world is apostate.

That the world is God-rejecting. And part of the function, of the prophetic function of the church, is not only to confront the apostate church, but to confront the apostate world. The world that sniggers and scorns at any reference to God in its secular discussions, thinks it bad taste to introduce the name of the Lord in a discussion on chemical dependency, when the fact of the matter is that the whole thing, the whole discussion is shot through with deception, as is suggested even by the phrases that they use.

Because chemical dependency is a euphemistic evasion of the reality of the satanic problem of drug addiction and alcohol addiction. And if we allow them to get away with the vocabulary of chemical dependency or abuse, we are acknowledging the premises by which they operate. And therefore the problem is seen in a secular context, which requires a secular solution, psychiatric or social.

But if you call the thing for what it is, sin, then it's got to be addressed in another way. And the appeal then is not for a social answer or a task force, as was suggested in those days, but repentance. So just to remind us that Acts 17 is a confrontation between two classic mindsets, and that in it, though Paul was not conscious of what he was expressing, what he was expressing is a whole statement of a Christian or spiritual world view completely at opposition with that which was held by the Greeks.

It says Paul stood in the midst, in verse 22. It's a beautiful statement of the role that God intends for the church. Not at the sidelines, not at the periphery, not content with a schedule of services or activities or programs, but to stand in the midst of a secular and apostate world and to bring a penetrating statement of the reality of God, which if men do not see it and do not respond to in this lifetime, they shall eternally suffer.

That's why in the very same statement of the cosmology of God, that He created the world and He's the Lord of the heaven and the earth, that He's appointed the habitations, the bounds by which men live, for the purpose of seeking Him, in the same statement Paul ends by talking about judgment. For God has appointed a day in which He will judge all men by that one whom He has raised from the dead. See, it's a complete statement.

There's a church that needs to stand in the midst and not only confront and unmask the premises by which the world thinks and conducts itself, but to warn them that except they repent, what does that word mean? Change their mindsets and take on the mind of God and His view, they shall be judged and there shall be an eternal consequence for their willful ignorance of God. So part of the function of the church is to

unmask the false assumptions, the premises, the unspoken values by which the world conducts itself and which no one ever faults or examines or questions. If you leave something in silence, you are testifying to your witness or affirmation of that thing.

So the standing in the midst is not just an accidental phrase and Paul stood in the midst. It's a picture of God's intention for us. To unmask the false premises, the assumptions, the pretenses of an apostate and arrogant God-rejecting world.

You say, but they had a statue and a monument that said to the unknown God. Doesn't that show that their heart was in the right place and that they're God-minded and that they pay some acknowledgement to a God whom they do not know? Doesn't that impress you? No. It doesn't impress me and it didn't impress Paul because the inscription on the monument said to the unknown God and what Paul discerned by the Spirit was not only was he unknown to the Greek philosophers but they chose to willfully keep him unknown.

They not only preferred a God that was unknown, they preferred a God that was unknowable. You say, why would men prefer that? Because an unknown God makes no requirement but a God who is known does. A specific God has a specific will.

He speaks. He gives commandments. He says, thou shalt not.

But an unknown God? What consequence is there for men in the world who have this kind of faint pseudo-spiritual reference to an unknown God? As you can see by the eye of the Spirit, all it is doing is inflating their own ego and giving them a sense of spirituality, a sense of being tolerant or even faintly interested in spiritual things. But the truth of the matter is that they don't want to know a God who makes himself known. And what Paul says is that the very purpose of your life and being, that God has by one blood established all nations of men for what purpose? To seek their fortune? To establish their careers? To have successful businesses? To live a comfortable worldly lifestyle? No.

That they might seek after God if happily they might be found of him. Just let that sink deeply into your hearing. The utter simplicity of Paul, out of all of the motives for which men might reasonably and decently and even in a sense significantly live their lives on the earth, he speaks of one thing, the central thing, and he sees it with the eye of absolute clarity.

There's only one purpose for our human existence. It's to seek God and to be found of him. You know that that was the view of the church in the Middle Ages? That they looked upon the life on this earth as a veil of tears, as a transient and momentary experience, as preparation for eternity.

And that the whole issue of our human being and existence is the knowledge of and the relationship with God. That view is dismissed today as medieval. It came out of the Dark Ages.

But the interesting thing is that Paul believed it. And he believed it with such a totality that he could speak it with conviction to men whose mindset and lifestyle was completely contrary. You say, why don't we speak it with the same kind of penetration? Because we ourselves do not really believe it.

You say, what do you mean by that? I mean this. Believing is not just a matter of giving acknowledgement to creedal truth. It's not just acknowledging the correctness of doctrine or Bible statement.

True believing is attested by true living. Paul lived what he believed. And that's why he could stand in the midst and speak this with such penetration because the words had a quality of penetration because it was in keeping with what his own life is.

That's why he was fleeing persecution. Because men do not want to hear something that challenges the comfort, the well-being, the culture that they have constructed for themselves in absolute ignorance, if not defiance of God. There were two premises that ruled the Greeks then and that rule those who are Greek-minded now.

And one is the premise of intellectual attainment. Greeks were keen about intellectual attainment. And their other distinction, the other foundational thing was moral attainment.

So by virtue of intellect and by virtue of morality one can come to a distinguished human life. So what do you think about this Jewish character who has not much to look at and comes into their midst and in the first statement he blows down their two premises. I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious.

What? If there's anything that an intellectual hates it's to be called superstitious because he prides himself upon his intellectual attainment. But Paul was not impressed by the outward show. There are other things about being moral.

It's really interesting. Plato was a homosexual. I think many of the great philosophers, Aristotle, men of great intellectual distinction also had boys with whom they practiced their homosexuality.

It was just a common feature of Greek civilization. And yet such men can conceive of themselves moral. Do you know why? Because they measure by themselves.

Because the premise of secular humanism is that man is the measure of all things. That's why they want God to remain unknown. And if they can throw a bone to appease their conscience by having a statue or a monument with the inscription to the unknown God it allows them the subjective sense that they're making some acknowledgment that there might be some force out there.

And then they're free to pursue their own sensual delight and gratification. A conflict of mindsets is more than just an idle engagement of ideas. It's a vital clash of lifestyles.

And the reason that the church has not suffered persecution in modern times is because we have not stood in the midst of an apostate world to confront them with the phoniness of their pretense and their premises so as to challenge the way in which they actually live. And the reason that we have not is because we live too much like them. Which is to say that unconsciously or otherwise most of our own life is governed by secular rather than by spiritual premises.

Do you really believe, can I ask you tonight, that the single dominating purpose for which we have life and being is to seek God that we might be found of Him? Is that your ruling passion? It's not unusual to find ministers of God whose ruling passion is their own career. Although they will employ a complete Christian vocabulary and terminology with all sincerity, they have not come onto the ground upon which Paul himself stood. If you think that Paul came to Athens by accident, it shows the kind of secular mind you have because in the spiritual mind there is no such thing as accident or happenstance or circumstance.

Paul was not ruled circumstantially. He was ruled by the Spirit of God. It gives every appearance of a man not having control over his own situation.

He was brought by other men. But I believe with all my heart he was in God's place in God's appointed time. I believe that there's a Mars hill that's waiting for us.

There's a place of confrontation waiting for us that is a final and ultimate confrontation. But the reason that we have not ascended it yet is that we're not yet ready. We're not yet apostolic.

We do not yet have a Pauline mindset. We do not see with the single-eyedness of a Paul. And we cannot proclaim with conviction the way that he could because our lives are not yet in conformity with what we profess to believe.

Much more than we realize, we have been affected by secular assumptions that the real purpose of our life is our family, our well-being, our comfort, our acceptance, our satisfaction. And if we can do God a service at the same time, who could ask for anything more? In fact, isn't that the picture of American Christian respectability? To be a good family man and successful in your career and to give God an hour or two on Sunday and to acknowledge him by saying grace over the table and putting a dollar in the collection plate or on special offerings for missionaries, something like that. It is so distorted.

It is such an aberration, such a removal of the passionate thing which God intends for all men. That maybe before we confront the apostate secular world, we need first to stand in the midst of the church and to confront it. In the American Standard, it talks about the object of your worship.

I mentioned this last week. We spent a few minutes in this text by the end of the session. What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim unto you.

While I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar. I love that statement because it gives a penetrating statement of the nature of idolatry. Idolatry is always the elevation of objects over God, examining the objects of your worship.

It was a false subject and therefore also a false worship. And Paul nails it in his very first statement. Whom you therefore worship in ignorance, and you can write down in your notes, willful ignorance.

It's not an ignorance that is accidental, that they couldn't help themselves. It's the kind of ignorance by which men choose to be ignorant and to keep God as unknown. Him I proclaim unto you.

So I want to raise a question now, just to bring again the subject to our own situation. What is being unmasked is false religion, false philosophy, insincerity. Men who profess to hold intellectual integrity as a value are false in the very thing that they profess to seek.

It's neither moral nor intellectual. It's a pretense and a sham that gives the faint impression of a kind of spirituality, but it is a pseudo-spirituality. It has for the object of its worship not God, but objects.

And my question is, to what degree is that a statement of our present Christianity? A sham, a pretense, giving the appearance. Is it possible for idolatry to be conducted even in the name of Jesus? What you see here is men fashioning a God in their own image and for their own use. That's why the very next statement has to do with God doesn't live in temples made by human hands as if he's in need of anything that hands could make.

And as I survey, excuse my impression, our contemporary Christianity, that's the impression I get. We want a God that serves our purposes. We're fashioning him as an instrument for our ends.

And you need to understand that because it's not always carnal. It could even be, in a sense, spiritual. We want to receive the benefit of church attendance.

We want a Sunday school where we can bring our children. We want a nice, happy addendum to our week-long experience. We want the sense of uplift by having gone to a church on Sunday.

We want to feel the kind of sanctifying and uplifting thing that a proper church atmosphere should provide. You say, what's wrong with these things? What's wrong with them is that it has at the central object of its concern man himself. False religion and idolatry by whatever form, even in the name of Jesus, will have as its central object and concern man himself.

Spiritual self-gratification. You say, but oughtn't men have uplift? Shouldn't they experience blessing? Shouldn't they receive benefit of the word? Shouldn't their children be instructed? Yes, but these should be secondary consequences of a single-eyed pursuit of God for his own sake and for his glory and not the first object of our concern. You see how subtle it is and how faint is the line and the boundary between true faith and idolatry.

As a matter of fact, the only one who can unmask it is a Paul. That is to say, an apostolic man or an apostolic or a prophetic presence. Someone so steeped in God, someone so absorbed in concern and passionate concern for the jealousy of his glory that the faintest deviation of that which appears to be God and yet is a misuse and a misappropriation is made only an object for the purposes of men is identified and spoken to with boldness.

Him whom you ignorantly worship, I declare unto you. That's very bold and it has to be. It will always be looked upon as offensive.

In fact, it's nothing less than a miracle that Paul came down from that mountain alive. These kinds of confrontations don't end by your being applauded. They may end by your being carried away.

Remember that the first martyr Stephen suffered his death because of the confrontation that he brought to men who thought themselves religious through the power of the spirit and word which he proclaimed to them. As your fathers did, so do you always. So do you also.

You do always grieve the Holy Spirit. And when they heard that, they gnashed with their teeth upon him because men cannot stand to be confronted over a construct that they have made for themselves that celebrates their own spirituality if it's a pretense or a sham. And the instance, the situation of Stephen is a graphic illustration that Jews could even use the things given by God, the law, and the whole construct of Jewish religion and yet fashion it in such a way as to form a kind of an idolatry that elevates themselves pharisaically.

That when a simple waiter on tables, a busboy, comes in the power and the anointing of the Holy Spirit to confront them and to challenge them with their farce, they cannot bear to hear it. If you've ever been to Paris, you can visit the Hill of the Martyrs, excuse my French pronunciation, Montmartre. Have you ever heard of that? M-O-N-T-R-T-E, something like that.

It's famous now. It's on the left bank for artists, for prostitution, for red light district and all that jazz. But you know what the original meaning of Montmartre was? This guy Dionysius, it says that, some said we'll hear again of this matter, some scoffed, and it says, some clave unto him and believed.

Among them was Dionysius. Interesting that the very name means revelry. It means orgiastic, sensual revelry.

And a man who was named by that, hearing the bold proclamation of this unprepossessing Jew who had nothing about him that was impressive, among these distinguished and scholarly and erstwhile philosophical Greeks, heard the power of God given to those who speak the words of God and clave unto Paul and believed. And according to Christian history and legend, this same Dionysius became an evangelist of God to proclaim the gospel and came to a pagan part of the world in Europe today called France and on that very place in Paris he went up to a hill to proclaim to the pagans there their deceptions, their illusions, their myths, their shams, their pretense, but did not come down. Do we love truth enough that we're willing to a confrontation in which we might not necessarily be a survivor? And maybe unconsciously because our first concern is not seeking God that we might not know him, but it has been our comfort.

It has been our security. It has been our well-being that we shrink from the kind of confrontation that might be costly. I can't think of a more desperate need for this hour than men like Paul or a church like Paul in the midst of an apostate Christianity that is really an idolatry in the name of Jesus that does not require anything from men, but their mere bodily attendance and the dollar in the collection plate, that it needs to be in the midst of all of this which is celebrated as Christianity, an apostolic, powerful and bold presence that shows unto them the way of truth.

Wouldn't it be devastating for Paul to come into the midst of little old ladies and to give them the kind of blast that he gave these Greek philosophers? Isn't that something of the gist of the question? Well, the premise upon which the question itself is framed suggests that we have a control over what we speak or that we can determine the content or the character of our speaking in any situation. But what I want to say is this, and it's a spiritual view, a mindset, is that Paul himself was not the author of his words on any occasion, either before Greeks or before Jews. And that's why he was so powerfully relevant whether he was in a synagogue or on Mars Hill.

Because in the same way that Jesus said that the words that I speak are not my words, but the words which my Father gives me, I believe the same is also true for Paul, which is really the statement of the glory both of his life and his ministry. What was standing on Mars Hill was the incarnated God in the body and life of a man who forsook his own distinction, his own academic ability, his own brilliance, his own Jewish attributes, and counted them as dung that he might know Christ. And what was being expressed out of his mouth was the wisdom of God appropriate for that particular moment and for that setting.

See, we are on really profound ground right now. In fact, we are on really the heart of the offense of the faith. People don't mind a Christianity by which the believer subscribes to certain principles or tries in an admiring way to follow the precept or the example of Jesus.

But to believe in the supernaturalness of a resurrected and ascended God who has somehow incarnated in the very man who is speaking, that is mind-blowing and offensive. Paul did not just proclaim to them the resurrection. He demonstrated it.

And what I want to say is that if Paul ever stood before old women, I believe that the wisdom of God and the grace of God who knows these women because they are utterly transparent in His sight would speak through the apostle in the way appropriate to that need. And the enormous significance of what is being transacted by the words that come out of the mouth of the minister who faces them, it's an enormously

significant thing. But no less significant than Paul on Mars Hill.

Not just in terms of those who were then before him in that moment of speaking, but something is being established that is timeless and it is going to affect every subsequent generation. And it is even in fact becoming the core of our own discussion in these days. Why? Because it is the one place in all Scripture that shows in a profound way the clash of two mentalities that are absolutely opposed.

The mentality of the world and the mentality of the kingdom. If Paul knew that, that he was not just speaking to men before him, but that what he was going to say was going to be recorded for posterity and influence generation after generation and even be a text that might release the church in our generation to be that apostolic presence and to come to a Mars Hill confrontation with apostasy, what then would he have said? And the answer is not one syllable other than what he did say. You know what? One of Paul's most frequent statements, and I repeat it continually myself and all of us who stand before men in the name of God need to, and that is, who is sufficient for these things? And I want to tell you that though this is a little building and we have only a handful of souls, it was our prayer for tonight.

If you think that I think that this is just a class and that the only issue is to get through the material and to present it reasonably so as to edify those who come and then think that it's well done, that that's it, you're mistaken. I see this in an eternal context of meaning. In other words, I bring even to this situation the mindset of a Paul.

I see this apostolically. I see this thing that is happening tonight as once and for all. We'll never again be able to repeat it.

I see it as being something that is going to come into the spirit and consciousness of those who assemble. But there's a mystery even that goes beyond that, that we spoke in prayer before some of you came tonight, and that is suggested in Isaiah where the prophet says, Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. That there's a mystery by which the word goes into the earth and into the air, into the heavens, to perform a work irrespective of or despite or even beyond people.

And maybe as we go on in this hour, we're going to come increasingly into this kind of prophetic experience where there's a mystery of speaking that goes beyond those who are hearing you. I believe that that's taking place tonight. I can't explain it.

There's something that is going into this community. In fact, it ought to be true every time the word of God is spoken by men, and especially so in the secular situation where up till now we have been barred. There's something that God is wanting to penetrate and to bring a measure of light, and that the enemy with its principalities and powers that brood over this place would be required to recoil.

There's a strategy of God that goes far beyond this class tonight that has to do with its ultimate purposes for Cast Lake, for this region, for revival in this area, for which this is a fitted portion and part. Knowing or sensing these things, how then ought we to speak? How then ought we to conduct the class? I have to tell you, and I said half-jokingly, tonight as I began and last week, I don't know how to commence. Who is sufficient for these things? And that brings us again, and I'm going to hammer this again and again, the whole central premise of Paul that was so devastatingly displeasing to these Greeks, for which reason they called him a babbler and they scoffed, was the issue of resurrection.

Which is to say, the issue of a supernatural God who has come into earth historically in a moment of time and performed something that has been recorded and witnessed and through it has affected all subsequent generations through his death and resurrection. You see, this stops men from the vagaries of being only superficially spiritual. I have heard rabbis talking about higher powers, or how do they say it? They use a pseudo-spiritual vocabulary that seems at first hearing to be very honoring and flattering to God, that acknowledges somewhere up there in some distant place there's a higher power.

But what it is, is an absolute cop-out. They do not want to recognize the specificity of God. They don't want to have to face a specific God who has come historically in a moment of time and done something that once and for all rips the mask off of every false pretense of religion and says, absolutely, this is the way.

And if that were not so, Paul would not have to be in Greece. This is the gospel for all nations. Go ye into all the world.

Because Paul himself said that in times past God has winked at your ignorance, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. See, these are bold and absolute statements. And I, boy, Lord help me.

It's the absoluteness of the faith which offends men. It is the supernaturalness of the faith which offends men. It's the resurrection of the faith which offends men who do not mind it only as a doctrine.

See, that's okay. But God never intended it to be mere doctrine. He intended it to be life.

He intended a whole church to stand in the midst by the same power and boldness as by which Paul stood, which was not his Jewish moxie. It was the boldness that is in the resurrection. Paul not only spoke the resurrection, not only proclaimed it, he demonstrated it.

As a matter of fact, nobody can proclaim the resurrection except by the demonstration of its power. That's why we're content to let it remain as doctrine. There are very few resurrection men about who can stand in the power of God and trust the wisdom of God to give them the appropriate words whether they're standing before old women or they're standing before a bunch of hardened worldly intellectuals who need the sharpest penetrating word of God.

Because Jesus himself could roar like a lion or he could bleat like a lamb. But the fact of the matter is that he himself never determined which one or the other. The words that I speak are not my words.

They are the words which my Father gives me. How many of us have the apostolic faith tonight to believe that as the Father gave Jesus words, he can give us words also? And that as a matter of fact, what God is waiting for is men who will come to that faith. And that when they'll come to that faith, they'll find themselves in the place of confrontation not speaking their words, but his.

Paul began with a patent insult to intellectuals. I perceive that in all things you're too superstitious. What? I'll tell you what.

There's not a school of evangelism on the face of the earth today that would prescribe that as a principle in witnessing. You know what they tell you? Four spiritual laws. Treat them, make them nice.

And is God averse to using insult? See, I see this as a divine sarcasm. The object of your worship, the God whom you ignorantly worship. I observe that in all things you're too superstitious.

My point is this, that this is not a calculation by Paul. Paul on his way up to Mars didn't say, now listen, what am I going to say to these guys? Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, now that I have this opportunity, I want to say today that there are a lot of questions that flow from this, like even the question about whether confrontation is not love, or severity is not love, or does love have only the form that placates or that is pleasant or receivable. For example, if we think that this is not likely God, there's another place that I can think of.

Again, prophetic confrontation, Elijah against the prophets of Baal on another hill, Carmel. And there he mocked them. I mean, this is terrible impoliteness.

Where's your God? Is he sleeping? Perhaps he's gone out for a walk or something like that. From what I understand, you can check me out on this, in the statement where it says that perhaps he's gone for a walk, that the King James interpreters did not have the courage to give the literal statement. And what Elijah really said to his adversaries was, is he on the john? I mean, it's scandalous.

You wouldn't think a prophet would say something like that. So, I don't want to belabor this, but you need to understand the use of the text in the theme that's before us. And we're not talking about how to minister to the various diversity of needs, except this, that the spirit of God is the wisdom of God and the power of God and the love of God.

And he does all things well. And I think that some of us who may have a sentimental view of love may miss that God when he chooses to express himself severely. And then I want to say also, that the nature of this hour is such, in the kind of apostasy that is sweeping the world and the kind of sleep that is in the church, that I'm expecting more of this kind of confrontation.

And I'll say this, that if you're capable of this kind of use, you're equally as available to God for gentle use as well. But if you limit yourself to that which is gentle because it is amenable to your spirit and to your way, and you think it appropriate to the gospel, you're going to find yourself not a participant in the kinds of historic things for which God is intending his church. You've got to be instant.

This is a phrase from Paul himself. Instant, in season, and out. In synagogues or in Mars Hill.

In fact, the whole chapter talks about Paul in the marketplace. The whole thing begins with the spirit within him grieved when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, therefore disputed he in the synagogues with the Jews. What has that got to do with idolatry? Everything.

He went to the place of public religion where it is most commonly practiced. And then he went to the marketplace with the Jews and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. And I don't believe that there was any encounter in the marketplace that was circumstantial or apprehensive.

And then those hearing him there brought him up to meet the philosophers that they might hear what this babbling says. You can see a whole divine progression, but it begins with one thing, and it's a central thing, and maybe the deepest answer to the question that's raised, that Paul's spirit within him winced when he saw the whole city given to idolatry. Every divine action begins, must be initiated, with the operation of the Spirit of God.

It wasn't the man who was just acting out of his own humanity. His spirit winced. The thing of God that was in him winced at what was ungodly in a celebrated capital.

God had a man who reacts as he himself, and from that point of beginning the whole thing unfolded. And Paul trusted the grace of God. And if you follow his career, you see the diversity of speaking.

It's not always confrontational, but if we're not willing for that, it may be that we're not as yielded to the Spirit as Paul is. And it's a premise. This is one of the premises of the biblical mind, that the resurrection is not just an event that's historic with Jesus, but by it there is a life available in the earth today for men and women in society who can live in the power of it.

Paul was certainly bold. You don't sense a tremor. Him whom you ignorantly worship, I declare unto you.

It almost sounds arrogant, and I'm sure that he could be accused of arrogance, but I think that he'll have his reward for his obedience on Mars Hill. That's my impression. We're speaking about an apostle, which is to say a man brought to a place of maturity in God, where he's had a long history.

Remember, 13 years in the wilderness, and he was not taught of flesh and blood, and he served an apprenticeship, and God is not going to send a novice up to Mars Hill, but a man who is grounded in God, who has been dealt with in the sufferings of his own heart, his own motives. It's interesting that God chooses a Jew to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Being Jewish, I know that one of the areas in which God has dealt with me over the years, and even presently, is still the lingering anti-Gentile thing that has come into me with my mother's milk.

Twenty years in the faith, and the Lord had me on my knees four o'clock yesterday morning to impress me that I need to pray for his deliverance in the power of the cross from what yet remains as a residue of anti-Gentile feeling that is characteristic of all Jewish culture. Now here, God takes a Jew and makes him an apostle to the Gentiles, and he sends him to the Gentile of the Gentiles, to the epitome of Gentile civilization, if I can put it that way, in Greece. And yet his word is not in any way discolored or warped or adversely affected by any subjective or human or personal aspect of his own being or Jewishness, because he's an apostle.

He is the full-orbed man in God. So we're touching things that are very large, and maybe one of the problems is why we lack confidence whether the offense is the offense of the gospel or the offense of ourselves is that it's a statement of the degree that we are not yet of apostolic stature, which also raises the question of the church environment in which we're in from week to week. Is it encouraging that stature? Are we moving in God? Are we facing the challenges and the confrontations? Are we growing in maturity and the knowledge of God? Are we moving in security in the spirit of God that we can discern between what is our own offense and the offense that is inherent in the gospel? See, the whole of our environment is not apostolic.

It is very churchy, very tame, timid, insipid, maybe too deferent to old women, too afraid to offend, and therefore it's not an environment that is conducive to men coming to the kind of maturity that allows them to go to a place of confrontation with the knowledge that the offense, when it comes, will not be of themselves but of God. So we're opening up, we're lifting the lid on tremendous questions, and then just to say, to bring it into our subject matter, why is the church that way? Because I think far more than we realize, we have allowed secular suppositions to come into the operation of the church. As a matter of fact, we have allowed the world to define the church.

We've allowed the world to determine the hours in which we can conduct our services and what the relationship between the church and the world is to be, and not to cross that line or to be impertinent and

to bring a divine or godly dimension into secular discussion. So we're the victim of a great deal of unconscious infiltration from the spirit of the world that has affected many of our premises by which we conduct church and has kept us from the environment conducive to producing men of the stature of Paul. Apostasy doesn't come full-blown, ipso facto, by the snap of fingers.

It comes by process of carnality. So we need to watch very keenly what is carnal today is tomorrow's apostasy, and already there's a mixture and an eleven working in the entire lump. But to say apostate is not spitting a word out of the church.

Your heart is touched with compassion and concern that out of that very thing God is wanting a bride, and therefore the greatest love is to confront it and to show its error and its deviation and to bring it to the original faith that God intended, which is the apostolic faith. So you always take a risk in making the kind of statements that you do in the space of an hour or two that you need to come back and define and amend and put a footnote on and explain. We need an apostolic environment, which is to say a loving environment that can hear something and not be offended with a man willing to hear again, willing to consider, willing to see him rather than the thing that shuts him off.

And maybe it's a statement of our immaturity. And the whole construct of the church, of the sermon on Sunday, that it's not in that kind of environment of exchange, of hearing, of coming back again, of willing to hear something that is sharp or cutting. I took that very risk myself in our own congregation Sunday.

See, I'm not just a prophetic man. I'm also an elder or a shepherd for a flock over which I have responsibility before God. And yet after prayer and looking to the Lord, I had a word to share that I knew that if it didn't come off just right, that if there was so much as a certain valence or a certain emphasis or too strong a sense of things or the wrong syllable, wham, the whole thing could be misconstrued and become an offense rather than a blessing.

And maybe to some degree that happened. But I had responsibility before God that required me to take the risk. And I believe that we are in a context in which such risks can be taken.

And in fact, it is the taking of those kinds of risks that is the very ingredient for spiritual maturity. But the fear of man that paralyzes us, that keeps it safe, that is unwilling to take the risks, that makes us tremble before men lest they be offended is the very factor that has been contrary to the maturity encouraging thing. So one of the premises and the difference between the secular and the spiritual mind is the secular mind is foundationally man-pleasing.

There is no God. But the truly spiritual mind is rooted in the fear of God and is willing to take its risks with men. But, for example, Isaiah in that first chapter, I keep coming back to that, not only did he say, Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth, he also said to Israel that from the top of your head to the soles of your feet you're full of wounds and sores that need to be bound up, that the city of righteousness has become a city of horrors and murderers.

He made the most extreme and outlandish statements that were not yet true to those to whom he spoke it. But the prophet always has an intense burden and sees something in a proportion that men do not see and always in a certain sense before it has yet become revealed to them. And yet why must he speak it now? Because by that speaking he forewarns them and calls them to a repentance which, if they'll heed it, will save them from becoming the thing that he's describing.

Jerusalem, the city that was the city of righteousness, has become, he said, a city of murderers and a city of horrors. It wasn't yet so, actually, and historically, but by his prophetic sight he saw that that was the imminent conclusion. And he described Israel as the ass knows its owner, the ox its master's crib, but my people do not know, they do not consider, or a sinful nation and laden with iniquities.

Now maybe that wasn't yet true, but it was becoming true, and he spoke it with that prophetic vigor and totality and extremity that sounds a warning. Maybe one of the things that we need to distinguish is the difference between a pastor's perspective and the prophet's. And both are needful for the total well-being of the body, and it's interesting that God does not subject a people to the continual barrage of the prophet, but they move on.

They are a traveling mobile ministry, but the pastor who remains with their people then picks up the pieces, then reviews what was said, then brings it into proportion that they can receive and applies the bombs and so on and so forth. But that's not my calling. So I have to confess, yes, I'm speaking this subject from an intense and prophetic view, and I don't believe that that's an accident.

I believe it's God's intention, because that's the way it needs first to be sounded. Your problem as pastors is to take the things that are being sounded into your own spirit, and then by the same spirit by which I'm speaking to mediate and to minister that to those who before you week by week by week. But we need to see.

The prophet sees, as they say, the large picture. He sees the total overview. He has the cosmic view, and he's very jealous of the glory of God, and he makes those kinds of statements.

And I think that when the dust settles, we may find that though their view sounds extreme to us, it's more true than what we think it is, and closer, if not identical, with things as God sees them. And in fact, one of the requirements of the spiritual mind is to see as God sees. We would be shocked.

Remember what Isaiah said, who was the prince of prophets, when he caught a revelation of God as he is? Woe is me, I am undone, I'm a man of unclean lips, and I live in the midst of a people of unclean lips. And this is a prophet and an oracle of God, but he did not see it until he saw the revelation of the glory of God. Not only did he see God as he is, he saw himself as he is.

And he cries out in great shock. And I think that we need to prepare ourselves for that kind of seeing. In fact, a great deal of what I believe is going to be the anguish of hell is that when we pass this life, we're then going to see as we are seen.

And part of the role of the church presently is to communicate that seeing while many have a chance to rectify their lives and to repent and to be brought into the knowledge of God. We have an unhappy task. It is to confront men with a view, a cosmic view, of reality, of judgment, of things to come, which is totally contrary to their entire mindset.

And that was the issue of Paulette Marceau. Some scoffed, some called him a babbler, some said, we'll hear again of this matter. They never did.

But a very few clave unto him and believed. And that, I think, is the pattern that is going to be characteristic of all confrontation. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone.

And one thing that is distinctive of prophetic and apostolic seeing is this sense of eternity that is powerful and present, which is lacking from our present mindset. Paul said, knowing the terror of God, I persuade men. He might well have said, I offend men.

In fact, if we knew the terror of God, we'd be more willing to take the risk of offense than assume the safety of propriety. He had a sense of eternity and the consequence of eternity outside of God that was so vivid for him that it affected the way in which he confronted and stood and spoke, whether in synagogues or before Greeks. And maybe if we had that same burning sense, our view also would be altered about whether we're going to offend or how are people going to receive it.

He said, how is it about falling into the hands of a living God? That's the whole scripture. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. How many believers today who are not apostate, good, sound, bona fide believers could say that and could say it with conviction, who know the fear of God? As a matter of fact, the very thing that keeps us from that fear of God is the fear of man.

And it's the thing that needs to be restored if we are going to have a spiritual mind. And I just want to stop there.

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