

The Christian Mindset - Part 3

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the need for Christians to engage with the secular world and act upon their spiritual observations, as exemplified by Paul's ministry in Athens.

Duration: 1:25:24

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 28:6, Acts 17:22-23, Romans 6:23, 1 Corinthians 15:20

Topics: "Mindset"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the challenges of teaching and preaching the word of God. He shares his personal experience of teaching a compulsory class on American history to students who were disinterested and involved in various negative behaviors. Despite the difficulties, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not simply being a teacher, but also a believer in Christ. He encourages believers to have a spiritual mindset and to live in a way that reflects the teachings of Paul in the Bible.

Transcript

Chapter 17 of the Book of Acts, about the middle of the chapter, describes Paul in flight. He was sent away, it says, in the 14th verse, to go to the sea. And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens, and receiving a commandment unto Silas and to Mophias, for them to come to him of all speed, they departed.

So here's Paul brought by circumstances in which he had nothing to do. In the course of his apostolic life, brought to a place he perhaps did not intend to visit. But what is to ensue now is a divine encounter, because God had his man in his place in his time.

And it begins with this very critical 16th verse. Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. This is the beginning of the whole enormous encounter.

He saw something that stirred his spirit. He saw a whole city given over to idolatry. And I just want to say that this is not the obvious sight of anyone who would happen to be passing through Athens.

Every city in the earth today, including Cast Lake, is wholly given over to idolatry. But how many Pauls are there whose spirit within them wints as they see it? This is not just natural human observation. This is seeing by the eye of the spirit that affects the spirit of God within the spirit of a man.

Paul was acutely sensitive and conscious to anything contrary to God. And he immediately discerned the whole city given over to idolatry. And it pained him so much that he grieved.

His spirit was stirred in him. Other translations are even more graphic. He was grieved, he was cut to the quick, he was pained at that sight.

Therefore he disputed in the synagogues with the Jews. What does idolatry have to do with the synagogues of the Jews? And the answer is everything. Because there's no place where idolatry is more apparent than in the houses of religion.

So this is a logical connection. It's not an accident that the first expression of his grieved spirit is to dispute in the synagogues with the Jews. So here's something we need to observe already.

When Paul saw something, it wasn't that he just clucked his tongue and felt bad about it. What follows from Paul's seeing or Paul's observations are Paul's acts. This is the book of acts.

And that too is part of a biblical mindset. That God gives us things to see and to understand, not just that we should contemplate them in ourselves or for ourselves, but that they should eventuate in acts that affect and bring a change or result. So the whole pattern here is a remarkable thing.

I think many of us think that if something is spiritual, it's not to have practical consequences. The practical thing is what we call secular, and the spiritual thing is what we call contemplative. The spiritual thing is something inward or personal, but the practical thing is outward and physical.

Paul never saw any such distinction. He only saw one thing. We need to see that one thing too, and seeing that one thing that results in an act or consequence in a practical way that affects life and society is the spiritual mind.

Shall I repeat that? That's a really important point. That's why we've left all of the decisions to the world, and they've allowed us to make the decisions on the church. If we're going to paint the building, change the carpet, invite a speaker.

But the things that pertain to war and peace, to the rise and fall of economies, to the whole character and conduct of nations, to life and death itself, that is reserved for secular men in secular councils by secular wisdom. We are allowed by spiritual wisdom to determine whether we're going to have an evangelist or whether the church will have a program. You understand what I'm saying? It's a false distinction that God never intended, that Paul never would have tolerated, and that we need to understand and to alter.

So I'm really happy just to see this progression. Verse 16, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw his eyes were open. He was not a man who would say, well, I'm not of the world.

What they do out there, that's just tough. I'm just concerned for the church. His eyes were open to see what was going on in the world, and he knew that the earth was the Lord's, and it cut him to the quick to see that men who were made in God's image were given over to idolatry, the whole city.

Athens was the crown of civilization, the proudest thing on the face of the earth, the glory that was Greece. So if idolatry was rampant in this supreme place of civilization, what could we expect any place else in the world? He was jealous for the honor of God in the earth, and therefore he was hurt, therefore he disputed with the Jews and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Talk about

getting right into the nitty-gritty of the secular world, in the market.

He didn't confine his conversation only to the synagogue. He went into the market, where we need again to go. When Peter was released from prison and the angel said, Go and stand in the temple and speak all the words of this life.

It wasn't that Peter was sent to the temple because it was religious. He was sent to the temple because that's where the public congregated. Go and speak all the words of this life.

Paul was in the marketplace, disputing, and this is again where the word of God, the mind of God, the views of God need again to be brought. And so from there certain philosophers of the Epicureans and the Stoics encountered him. Some said, What will this babbling say? Others said, He seems to be a set-aforth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.

He didn't think that that subject was too spiritual to express in a secular setting. He didn't bring a social gospel that just spoke about improving the physical condition of men or a community program. He brought the most sacred tenets of the faith right into the secular place.

The most hairy, the most utterly supernatural, the ickiest, the most offensive. He brought as a practical matter-of-fact thing to the consideration of men in the deepest secular place, which is exactly where God intended it to be brought. The resurrection is not just a doctrine that we can comfortably speak of within the context of a church.

It's an awesome reality that needs to be brought to the consideration of men deeply in the world. Paul knew that the prince of this world ruled over the world, but he knew also that God loved the world. One of our mistakes has been to think that because we are not of the world, that we should be indifferent to the world.

Paul was not indifferent. He came into it and brought the thing that it most desperately needed to hear, the reality of God and his views. So he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection, and they took him and brought him to Areopagus saying, 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, That deserves applause, because I think we need to appreciate that Paul is being borne up by the circumstances.

He was brought first by believers to Athens to escape persecution, and then by circumstances he is now being brought by Greeks themselves to the chief place of confrontation, Mars Hill. It is not something he asked for, something he anticipated. He is caught up in God.

He is a man instant, in season and out. He says that we should be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks of us, the reason for our hope. And now he himself is on the spot.

And what is he going to say? By what wisdom shall he give answer? It is a once and for all opportunity, never to be given again. History is going to be affected by this. Men are going to be eternally lost and damned on the basis of the hearing, receiving, rejecting of Paul's statement.

God is going to bring forth out of this future heroes of the gospel, the effects of whose ministry will be felt elsewhere in Europe, even to this very day. As I mentioned last week, that Dionysius, who is mentioned by name in Acts 17, as cleaving to Paul and believing, is reputed by church tradition to be the same one who was a martyr in Paris, on Montmartre, the hill of the martyrs in Paris, which is completely lost to the Parisians today. But it is supposed to be the same man saved in Athens, on the hill at Athens, becomes the man who brings the gospel in the hill in what is today France and was then pagan Europe.

So this is very consequential. Besides serving us and giving us a basis for understanding and a text, there is no way that we can see the enormous implication through time and through eternity, through one encounter. We need to have that sense.

Do you know why? That is a biblical mindset. Before we came to this building tonight, as we prayed at home, we prayed something like that. Lord, we know that there is going to be an amplification, a consequence of this night, far beyond those who come.

Far beyond Cass Lake, far beyond the state of Minnesota. We don't know, we can't imagine what it will be. It may come through someone who is in this room tonight, and who is going to be peculiarly touched by something expressed or done, affected in a certain way that maybe sometime in the future, ten years hence, in a certain crisis that may come, something will be quickened to them by what is being sown tonight in their hearts that will give answer for someone else in terrible crisis and save them out of death.

And maybe it will be more than an individual. Who knows? Maybe it will be consequential for many. Or the tape going far beyond this room.

There is no way to estimate what will be the reverberation unto the day of eternity by anything that happens in any particular moment of time. Are you understanding me? If we really believe that, how ought we to live? Another thing that we prayed tonight was, Lord, save us from thinking that this is just an ordinary evening. That this is not a big encounter.

This is not standing before thousands. It's just a handful of souls, local saints, others, the curious. You know, it's just a class, a lecture.

We can pray, but we don't have to really get deeply in prayer as if everything depends on it. It's not one of the larger things. It's just, you know, that's already a secular attitude.

That by its own human opinion determines the value of any certain thing in a scale that it establishes, usually in terms of numbers. The greater the number, the greater the value. But how many were Marcel when Paul spoke? Or who met him in the marketplace or in the synagogue? If we're measuring by numbers and that determines the value or the importance, we have already surrendered to a premise by which the secular world itself determines its values.

Got the picture? How desperately do we need to be returned or restored to the radical spiritual mind? Because if we had it, our whole life would be different. There would be nothing that we would consider insignificant or unimportant. There's nothing that we would think that we could perform on the basis of our own ability because we have the experience or the skill.

We would have such a sense of the manifold possibility of any single event that we would be continually invoking the blessing of God and the presence of God and saying, as Paul said continually, who is sufficient for these things. People think that Paul was some kind of, I don't know what, outstanding spiritual

man that we can't even begin to approximate what he was. He's just a rarity.

We could never hope to aspire to be anything like him. But that's wrong. Someone has said that the world has yet to see what God can do with any man and woman who is totally yielded to him, who totally would say with Paul, who is sufficient for these things, and who not only preaches the resurrection and Jesus, but lives by the resurrection and Jesus in the secular place.

Did I ever tell you how I tried that as a high school teacher? For those of you who have heard this before, my apologies, but I just feel like interrupting myself with this little anecdote because I was quite young in the faith. See, I'd heard about the resurrection. I believed it because I was a young believer.

I believed everything that God said. But was it a doctrine or is it a reality? Is it something that happened 2,000 years ago when Jesus broke the fetters of death and burst forth out of the tomb? Or is it something presently available to those who believe for the very actualities and realities of their life in every situation? See, what was happening to me is I had five classes a day of students who didn't want to be there. I taught a compulsory class on American history.

I had kids, black and white, of every kind of shape and description. They were out of it. Crooked on drugs, prostitution.

It was a metropolitan school. They were dull. They were up all hours.

They hated teacher because he was white. And in that context, I was required to teach. And what accentuated everything was that I was not content merely to be a teacher of history, even a good teacher of history, because I was now a believer.

The Spirit of God was in me. And I recognized that God was wanting to transact something more than names, dates, and places. We need to recognize what a ministry public school teaching is and that the teacher has greater access to the lives of young people than do their pastors.

And things come up in classroom situations that are so revealing and such openings for the Spirit of God to move. If we really believed and thought that the Spirit of God can move in a secular classroom. And I could keep you up for the rest of this whole session filling the time with one anecdote after another of how the Spirit of God moved in my classes.

The whole, virtually the whole youth section of our assembly's church was filled with converts out of my classes. I had day classes of teenagers and I had an adult night class. And God went to town in both places.

I saw Him challenge and shake. I saw the convicting presence of the Spirit of God come right into the material. We had a discussion on life after death one day that was out of the history, world history, about what the Egyptians believed.

And we began to discuss what death is. Is it only the final cessation that comes in what we call death when you bury the body? Or does death have yet other meanings? Can you know death even while you live? What does the Bible mean when it says that the wages of sin is death? Is that a valid question to ask in a secular class? Can the Bible be brought in as a source and a text as being worthy of the consideration of men as well as what some atheist and non-believer has had to say on any subject? God just began to take that. You could just feel the atmosphere heightening.

Under such conviction, the kids even forgot what time it was or when the bell was going to ring. And before we knew it, I had seven cardinal sins on the blackboard. And that the wages of sin is death.

And I said, what's the answer to save us from dying? I said, some of you guys are in death right now because of those very sins. Sin is reduction of life. Sin is restriction.

You're already experiencing that right now. What's the answer? Dead silence. But what a silence.

What a hush. Holy hush. And some kid piped up in the back room, Mr. Katz, he said, didn't we read when we studied Israel that they practiced sacrifice for sin, something like that? Oh, yes, I said.

Yes, we did, didn't we? I took my Bible up off the desk, turned to Isaiah 53, began to read Isaiah 53. He went to the lamb, went to the slaughter as a lamb. By his stripes we're healed, and the whole of the atonement of God.

And one of the last things that was said before the bell rang was, because you're not going to a church, God has brought his church to you. And I gave an invitation to receive the Lord and to have the sins wiped away. I took the oration, I went to the board, and I wiped away the sins.

Seventeen kids raised their hands and followed me in a prayer for salvation. Other such adventures, wholly unplanned, unpremeditated. I don't know if I would have had the courage, let alone the intelligence of how to take a secular subject as a means of leading kids to a place of eternal salvation.

But it was beyond my intelligence, beyond my planning, and beyond my courage. And, of course, there was complaint. You want to hear how God answered that? By the same wisdom? Because by that time, and shortly thereafter, I was getting rather frequent invitations to the principal's office.

It's interesting that the ones who complained were Christian parents. By and large, few if any complaints from Jewish parents or others, but Christian parents of a certain kind were offended by the supernaturalness of the God that I was proclaiming or setting forth in the course of our discussions. It was getting their kids stirred up.

And they didn't like their kids getting agitated about God and getting interested why it might actually interfere with their prospect for middle-class success. What if he decides to become a missionary instead of an engineer? Then what? His whole life is ruined. Have you ever heard, I don't know if you believe this, but there are Jewish parents, I've heard this many times from Jewish believers, who have said to their kids, formerly drug addicts, and just the most desperate specimens, I would much rather see you continue in drugs or even dead than you should have called on that name.

You've ruined your life. Isn't that remarkable? Well, I was called up to the principal's office. He was a Presbyterian lay preacher, something like that.

It's getting warm in here, isn't it now? And he said, he was really steaming, getting these calls. Mr. Cassie said, don't you know you're going beyond the rules and regulations? I thought, yeah, that's right, I am. I was stroking my chin and then I look up and I said, without any deliberation, I said, but what would you do if you were at a beach and you saw someone going down for the proverbial third time, crying for help with the water coming out of their nose and ears and just a moment away from death and there was a sign on the beach that said, no swimming allowed.

What would you do? Get out of my office! Yes, there's a rule and regulation, but when it's a matter of life and death, you need to set aside or the law transcends the limitations imposed by men. It's another statement of why there is so desperate a need for the sacred to come into the secular. The fact that men have raised up their laws and their regulations shows how far we've allowed their definitions to prevail.

And one of the most melancholy practices is to be found in evangelical churches on Sunday night when they have an evangelical meeting to those who are already believers, already saved, hoping that maybe somebody will come in through the door. So the message that should be going out to the secular world in the secular place, stand and speak all the words of this life, is being rehearsed with the same believers week after week after week who are already saved. So much are we boxed in by the definition and the restraint that society has established to protect its own interest while the issue of life and death and eternity goes unattended.

One of the reasons that we allow it without complaint is that we are not really that persuaded about the issues of eternity. We do not really burn for the sense of hell that awaits those who have never called upon his name. It's a doctrine which we technically believe in very much the same way that we believe resurrection.

But we do not believe burningly to the place where our spirit can wince within us as we see the condition of our students before us. And therefore we dispute daily or open our mouths or give the Spirit of God the opportunity to move in a place where he's not expected and to bring up the nets himself. Well, at any rate, given the kind of situation that I was in as a student who didn't want to be there and the other kinds of opposition, it was exhausting to carry on five times a day.

So you can learn to coast as a teacher. You can put your assignments up on the board, turn to a chapter so-and-so, do problems two, three, and four, and then pick up your newspaper and read it from the desk. But if you're going to lecture, if you're going to speak, if you're going to lead this discussion and seek to bring something forth out of that, that's tremendously demanding.

And five times a day is an exhausting thing. And I never made it to the fifth class. By the third class, my legs would go weak, my voice would go hoarse, my mind would go numb.

And I realized if I'm going to make it to the end of the day, I've got to restrict myself and parcel myself out a little bit at a time. But as I became intrigued with the issue of resurrection, I asked, how far could I go? If I come to the end of myself and trust God, would his resurrection life be available to me that I might say that I live by him? Because there's a scripture that says that as Jesus lived by the Father, so ought we also to live through him. This is the love of God toward us that God gave his Son, that we might live through him.

Do I dare try it? And what if that life doesn't come? And what if I'm there by the third or fourth hour of class with my face sticking out? No voice, no strength, no ability. I'll tell you what, if you don't have a command over the class by your very presence and your look and the energy of your life, those students could just about come up out of their seats and let you have it. Because I had never forgotten when I was a merchant seaman how a flock of pelicans were flying over where we were in Florida and some character picked up a big heavy nut and bolt and threw it up into the midst of that flock and hit a bird.

They were flying so peacefully together in formation, but when that one bird was struck and fell out of formation, went into a nosedive, to my utter shock and amazement, the rest of the birds that had been flying peacefully with it now came down to attack it and began pecking this thing to death, the wounded

and weakened member. I'd never forgotten that sight. You know what I thought? If I ever get weak before these kids, if they ever sense that I'm losing control, that I don't have the voice and the authority and I'm beginning to wobble and my mind goes dull, they might just about get up out of their seats and let Whitey have it.

Do I dare take the risk? Well, I was going to trust God for the resurrection. I came that day and I pulled out all the stops. I just gave everything I had.

I talked, I led, I carried on. By the second period, I could feel the third period, I was really weakening, and there came a perilous moment. Hey, you'd better be wise and conserve your strength.

You'd better not be too extreme and take this risk. Remember, God understands you're only young in the faith. But that still small voice that was beckoning, and I went all the way, I gave everything I had, and I ran out.

My voice went, my mind, I couldn't remember my name. I didn't remember what period of the day it was. I just lost my whole presence and my legs were weak and sagging.

I was just about to go down and I thought in that last moment, I began to see them coming up out of their seats. In that last, utterly pitiful moment, and in that moment, I want to tell you, something came into me, a strength, a power, a source of life. I could just feel from my legs up, that the strength not only came back, it exceeded what I had before.

My throat cleared completely, my mind cleared, I had real command presence, I knew where we were going, and we moved into another dimension. We shifted gears, and we moved into a transcendent dimension on the basis of His resurrection life. I just want to go on record, and I've said this before, I want to say it tonight.

I think that the issue of the resurrection is going to be the issue at the end of the age. We know that there's going to be a world church, an apostate church, and we know there's going to be a true church, and the two are going to be in collision. And I think that the difference is not going to be the difference in vocabulary.

They will all speak the same essential doctrines, but the difference is going to be a church that is moving in the life and the power of the resurrection, and those that are moving in that which is human and opposed. That issue is not going to be decided in a final moment. It's an issue that's being decided day by day now, even in the way that we conduct ourselves in things in which we think we do not need the power or the life of God.

We need to come to a transcendent place. We need to shift gears to believe for and expect and move in that life. When Paul preached to the Greeks, Jesus and the resurrection, he was not just technically speaking the subject, he was demonstrating it even as he was speaking.

Because I'll tell you what, if he did not speak the resurrection in the power of the resurrection, I don't know that he would have come down from that hill. It says, Some clave unto him and believed. Indicates that they were not just persuaded by technical arguments or the technical truth.

They clave unto him and believed suggests to me that they saw the very reality and the demonstration of the words in the man who proclaimed them. He didn't just speak the resurrection, he demonstrated it. And

it's a place where we need to be.

To expect it is part of the spiritual mind. To come to a transcendent place above human energy and ability. So Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill and said, and that's where we spoke and discussed last week, said what? What would you say having this one opportunity? What are the right words if you're not going to have this chance again? You'll have to get the tape, I don't want to go back over that material, but it's not at all what one would expect.

It's not a conventional evangelical sermon. He seems to rub his hearers the wrong way. He insults them.

I perceive that in all things you're too superstitious. Him whom you ignorantly worship, I declare unto you. It was not a nice statement calculated to appease men or to warm them up toward the speaker as we see so often in our church and conference practice.

It was almost offensive. It was offensive. But they were the words that God gave out of God's own wisdom that do not need to be explained to those to whom they're being spoken.

It was the strategy of God and not of Paul. Given in the moment by the life. We just came back from a weekend's ministry around the Minneapolis area, New Ulm, places like that, Redwood Falls, and we stayed at the home of a dentist who came to two of the full gospel meetings, Friday and Saturday night.

After Saturday night's meeting he said, this meeting was altogether different from last night's meeting. I said, yes, that's right. And if you'll be with us tomorrow morning, you'll see yet something altogether different from tonight.

Why is that? Because each has its own requirement. And God measures out what is appropriate. Not just in the word, but even the manner of speaking, the atmosphere, the whole course of each of those occasions was totally different, given of God.

Which is as it ought to be. If there's something that's coming with predictable regularity, we can suspect it is probably more merely the work of man than the work of God. In the beginning, God created.

And we ought to see that creativity still, if it indeed is his life that is being expressed. Okay. The last thing that we discussed at the end of last week's meeting was verse 24.

Posted in the midst of various pages, it said, Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious and superstitious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription to an unknown God. What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

The God who made the world and all things in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, neither is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all life and breath and all things. That may just sound like a little piece of preaching, or a nice true statement, but it is loaded. It contains a whole theology.

It contradicts the whole wisdom of the Greeks. It introduces a totally different perspective of men who like to believe that God is unknown and beside that, unknowable. And that the world itself is a kind of chaos or cosmic accident that just came into being in an unexplainable way.

If God is unknown, how then can you understand creation? And therefore, whatever order there is, whatever sense there is, whatever purpose there is, has got to be provided by men rather than by God. I'm going to repeat this because this is so important. The issue of whether the universe is an accident, a chance creation, or whether it is the creation of God is tremendously important for everything that follows.

If it's an accident, then men themselves, finding themselves in it or on it, are required to fashion their own life, their own morality, their own ethics, what they think is right. What else shall they live? But if there's a creator who is God, by that very fact, if he made the heavens and the earth, there must be a purpose, there must be a way that he intends for men to live in the earth that he created and the men whom he fashioned in his own image. So this is not just simply a statement about the origin of something.

It has an implication for life now. And so it's no accident that we find Paul saying that God who made the world and all things in it, which means he made you Greeks too, don't take credit for yourself to think that your life is your own. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

The issue of creation is the issue of lordship. And not just Lord of the heavens. See, we don't mind, okay, so God made the earth, okay, praise the Lord.

That's nice. And we'll allow him even to be the Lord of heaven. But the Lord of earth gets a little sticky because that's where we live.

And what we do not want is his lordship on the earth where we are. We want to be self-willing, freewheeling, independent, autonomous men doing our thing. So in one statement, Paul cuts right into that whole secular Greek mentality.

He's not just making a chance remark about the origin of creation. He's showing what the implication is. Since he is the Lord of heaven and earth.

I don't have the ability or the time just to tell you of the consequence that flows from these two different views, secular or spiritual, about the issue of creation. The whole rise of dictatorships, of Nazism, of fascism, of elite minorities leading mankind down into rivers of blood. The dictatorship of the proletariat, Marxism, every one of the ideologies of modern times is a direct result of the fact that men believe that the universe is an accident which leaves a vacuum for man to fill.

But what kind of man? Elite man. A leader, a fueler, an ideologist, a Karl Marx, to lead the rest of the fools into the brotherhood which ends up into being unspeakable death. If there's no God, then men have a complete vacuum to fill themselves.

But if he's the Lord of heaven and earth, that changes everything. One of the ways in which this conflict has a final expression is when someone who believes as Paul does falls into the hands of those who believe as the Greeks do. And it's remarkable that the torture and the horror that is perpetrated on believers by secular men, I just read that this afternoon in a report from Richard Wurmbbrand how in Nicaragua, assemblies of God's people, a man watched his daughter being raped and he had his eyes gouged out, other men were found dead with their bodies mutilated, their sex organs cut off, and they stepped into another in the most horrendous, unbelievable, demonic torture of believers.

They're not just content to kill them, but there's something in them that's malicious, that's bitter, that wants somehow to rub dirt in their face and I can't articulate this, but my spirit senses and understands why it goes back to this. They want to hear these men, we can't. Yes, we never did really believe it was only

foolishness.

They want some contradiction because these men represent something that is so contrary to everything upon which their secular life has been predicated. They can only get them to contradict it, to disparage God, even to curse God because of their suffering. Where is your God? Look how we're treating you and he does not interfere and we have complete sway over your body even to this torture.

But you know what the testimony of saints have been through the generations? They die gloriously even at the hands of those who abuse them pitifully. And the same thing took place in the crucifixion of Jesus. He wasn't just executed.

He was tortured. He was marred more than any man. He had no comeliness that we could desire him.

The world and its hatred against God, who is the Lord of heaven and earth, had opportunity to ventilate its hatred and bitterness against this stubborn fact, against that one who represents this view. We're not just talking about an idle difference of opinion. We're talking about something that strikes at the heart of the whole way in which men order their thought and live their lives and have their values.

That goes back to the issue of is God the creator of the universe and therefore also the Lord of heaven and the earth? And can you believe that he is the Lord of the earth and yet he's allowing you to suffer at the hands of those who despise him and not interfere for your release? The remarkable thing is that the glory that is revealed and that kind of patient endurance and suffering is the final revelation of the God who is the Lord of heaven and earth. Because you remember what that centurion said who stood at the base of the cross and watched Jesus die? He said, truly this is the Son of God. Something was revealed in the suffering, the patient suffering and magnanimity of Jesus in death who didn't curse those who were killing him but prayed instead for their forgiveness.

He exhibited something that's beyond human nobility and human character. See, this centurion had seen many squirming, shrieking, howling, cursing, spitting, pleading, weeping, self pity but he saw men exhibit none of these things. He saw men praying for those who persecuted him and yielding up his spirit to the Father.

Receiving what was coming upon him as somehow serving the purposes of the Father and therefore willing to endure it with great grace. He said, truly this is the Son of God. So, we need to see that though we're speaking about one or two verses what is contained in these verses are unspeakable depths of things that Paul knew in his heart and though it was confined only to one or two statements the spirit of all that Paul comprehended and understood was somehow carried by his words and I sense that the Greeks who heard them were stung in their hearts.

They recognized that he is the Creator and also the Lord of Heaven and Earth. What is the implication of that for me who is doing his own thing if he's the Lord of both Heaven and the Earth. And I hope that we'll get a chance to finish this in our one more session next week but Paul does not leave them without letting them know also that God has appointed a day in which he will judge all men by that man whom he has raised from the dead even Jesus Christ.

He does not allow them to be ignorant of the fact that God commands all men everywhere now to repent for he has appointed a day in which he will judge all men. Put that in your pipe and smoke it. That not only is he the Lord of the Earth but you're going to be judged and suffer an eternal consequence for living in

complete indifference to that fact that he is the Lord of the Earth because the way you've been conducting your life you would think you were the Lord.

You made the decisions. You called the shots. You picked up and went when you wanted and did this and did that and raped and looted and had your relationships and enjoyed yourself with complete indifference to what his will is who made the Heaven and the Earth and is the Lord of them and you.

You're going to be judged. If you think Paul went up there just to have a light discussion he was wrestling for the souls of men who ignorantly worshiped him. I boldly declare unto you this is an eternal confrontation.

It contains all of the elements that will ever be found when the world is going to be confronted by the people of the Spirit. That's why we need so deeply to be instructed. And the fact that we are not today confronting and expressing these things and warning them shows that we really do not deeply believe them as Paul did.

That our Spirit is not wincing when we see the whole city given over to idolatry. And you don't have to go to Athens to find that. You can stay right here in Catholic and watch the people looking into their boot tubes or shining their cars or farmers with their equipment and the myriad forms of idolatry that are everywhere in human life and practice.

But our spirits are not wincing because to a certain degree we're ourselves given to it. We're not seeing as Paul saw and we're not speaking as Paul spoke. Paul was a man who exemplified the spiritual mind.

And that's why God brought him to an ultimate place in confrontation with that which is its opposite to secular. I mentioned the books that have been an inspiration for me both by the same author, *The Secularist Heresy*. And here's what he says in the introduction of why he wrote this book.

One of the questions which this book tries to answer may be framed thus. In what ways is the Christian message contaminated by the intellectual temper of the civilization in which it is now preached? Many others have tackled the problem of how to present the Christian message in a way that's intelligible to 20th century mind. I have addressed myself to the opposite problem.

That of keeping the Christian message free of corruption by 20th century habits of thought which are fundamentally hostile to it. You say, Art, what is he saying in your words? What he's saying is this. The thing that occupies him is how to preserve the Christian message in its truth and purity and power in a secular world that is everyday impinging upon it and toning it down and reducing it and removing its radical content and making it a little patsy addendum to the busy world.

His concern is to preserve it, keep it free of corruption from the habits of thought which are fundamentally hostile to it. What are the habits of thought? They're the world's way of seeing. They're the secular mind.

Yes, there's an eternity. Most people will acknowledge and think that there's an eternity. But we'll worry about that when we die.

That's the habit of mind he's talking about. See, they recognize something is technically true, but they do not see it in the power of the truth and the fullness that God intends. Not that it's positionally there, but that eternity ought to be considered now.

If we're going to be judged, we're going to be judged for eternity. So our present acts now affect everything that is set in the context of eternity. This writer goes on to say, and I'm not good enough to find exactly the passages to put my finger on it.

Maybe I can. That if we believe that, all of our acts would be different. Because everything that we did, we would be thinking of in terms of how it will affect eternity.

In fact, even taking eternity into consideration will affect your present in terms of pleasure, pain, suffering, hardship, trial, difficulty. If you're just living in the present moment, these things are going to have such a proportion as to wholly possess your life. But if you see them in the context of eternity, as for example, that God may by these very things be shaping your eternal character, that your life does not end when you die, but you take with you what has been formed in this lifetime as an eternal possession.

And if you've allowed the process of God to be worked through the things that have come into your experience, even suffering, even hardship, that somehow there's a refinement, then a purging and a refining that brings you to a place in God closer to the presence of the Lamb and to the light that He is than you would otherwise occupy. If there's an outer darkness, is there an inner light? And are we having something to do with where we're going to be eternally stationed? Yes. Because we know that there'll be those who'll be cast out into outer darkness.

Why? The way they lived in this lifetime determined their eternal position. Do we really believe that? That the way that we live in this lifetime determines our eternal position? And therefore, do we have a view about this lifetime that is appropriate? Do we treat it as the transient, temporary thing it is in the light of the eternity that is endless, that follows? See, I'm almost speaking of a medieval view. I sound like something out of the Middle Ages, before the age of reason and enlightenment came.

And it's interesting that when it came, what happened? Men became this world-centered and we saw the whole rise of industrialism, affluence, prosperity, sensual living, all the things that pertain to this life and with it a corresponding loss of the sense of the life to come. The question is, which of these two views is true? And is it really true for us if we're not living in such a way as to reflect it? Paul was extremely conscious of God as judge. That's a spiritual mind that needs to be restored.

He writes in this other book, the Christian mind has allowed itself to become subtly secularized by giving a purely chronological status to the eternal. Do you understand that? It's just a matter of time. But eternity is much more than just endless time.

That is to say, the Christian has relegated the significance of the eternal life to the life that succeeds this one. He only sees it as something that follows. He does not see it as something that has a present value and significance.

In doing so, it has enabled itself to come to terms with the secular mind on a false basis. The basis is that here and now, Christians and secularists can share the same conceptions, attitudes, and modes of action since the essential difference between them is the dispute whether or not there is God's eternity beyond this world is one which begins to be applicable only when this life has ended. What he's saying is we have already so reduced ourselves and compromised that the only issue of discussion is when it will take place and not whether there is a present significance of anticipating eternity that affects your conduct now.

Would history have been history if nations had a consciousness of eternity and eternal judgment? Would Stalin have been Stalin? Would Hitler have been Hitler? Would there have been wholesale rivers of blood? Would abortion be taking place now in the volume that it is by the millions if men really believed that they were going to stand before the God of heaven and earth in judgment? Why is it that this is absent from their consciousness? Because it has not been pressed there by the only agency that God has given in the earth to do so, the church. Because what this man is saying is true. The secular thing has permeated the church and has dulled our spiritual mind until while we still technically hold the doctrine, we do not hold it as a burning truth.

And it's reflected even in our own life. We're not living in such a keen sense that we ourselves will be judged. And that's why there's so much scandal even in the church, running off with the organist, seducing the woman you're counseling, divorcing your wife and marrying another, which is now going on in wholesale proportion in the finest expressions of our modern day Christianity.

Scandalous! By men who are completely oblivious that God is a judge. It's an old-fashioned concept. It's not in keeping with our modern mind that you're going to be judged, held accountable.

This statement of Paul that he does not dwell in temples made with hands, neither is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything. Can open up a whole another volume of things. What does it mean if men think that they can establish temples with their hands in which God will dwell, or that they can give God something that he needs? It's completely setting something upside down and on its ear.

It makes God dependent upon man. It makes man the central and the primary thing, and God is the secondary and the subservient. Lord, give me grace right now.

You need to understand what was in Paul's heart. It's more than he's not served by human hands, but that what you Greeks need to see is that you've got a complete distortion that puts you at the center of all of your consideration and makes God a supplement for your life. When it's exactly the opposite, that is true.

You're here for his purposes. He's not here for yours. So if you understand what I'm saying right up to now, I want to ask you a question.

Which view prevails today in the church? The Greek view or the spiritual view? Is man being served by God or is man serving God? Is the purpose of church to advance the purposes of God and to obtain his glory and to establish the triumph of his death and resurrection? To rule and reign in the earth? To bring honor to the Father? Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Or is it that church has become a kind of institution, an agency to provide comfortable and pleasing services and other kinds of features to augment and to make happy the life of those who come? What view is being promulgated in seminaries where ministers are being trained? Is it a jealousy, an insane jealousy for the glory of God no matter what cost? Or is it how to conduct church in such a way as to benefit men, ensure their continuation and not rock the boat? See, Paul was striking at something very deep. These Greeks were deceived because there was an unknown God and therefore whatever notion they had of him was of their own making.

It wasn't man made in the image of God, it was God being made in the image of man and diminished so that we could serve him with our hands which makes us the primary thing and him the secondary. How much of that is possible even employing the name of Jesus and the terminology of Christianity? We all in this room can use the word Jesus or in Christianity today and in fact it's remarkable how facile the name of

Jesus is on everyone's lips. The Jesus revolution and the Jesus movement and Jesus rock and roll and Jesus superstar.

The name has never been spoken more frequently, liberally, easily. But what is meant by the name? Who is actually being invoked? Who is being referred to? Is it the authentic and awesome son of God? Or is it something conjured up in the imagination of a man himself that serves his ends which he labels Jesus? That's idolatry. That's putting God in your box and being guilty of the very error that Paul was pointing in this text.

You ever hear the statement about a liberal religion will do you good, but don't get extreme about it. Don't get carried away and don't get fanatical. But a liberal religion, fine.

What does that show? Man is going to determine the amount and the extent to which you can dabble in God. But the important thing is don't get carried away. Don't get lost in God.

Don't get fanatical. After all, it's you that counts. How it affects you, what benefit, and if it enhances your life, good.

It's great for the kids. Sunday school, nice. Family that prays together, sticks together.

But don't get carried away to the point where your self-interest or identity is somehow lost or dissolved in God. It's very much the same spirit and the same wisdom being expressed. The whole issue is the issue of religion as serving human ends or divine ends.

And if it is not serving divine ends, is he the Lord of heaven and the earth? And if divine ends are being served, does that mean that we're left out in the cold? We really are throwing our lives away because we believe that he's Lord and that the whole purpose of our being and our salvation and the church itself is to serve his purposes and his ends. Does that mean we become nothing? We lose our identity? We're lackluster? We could have had a brilliant career. Could have been in pictures.

But I became a preacher. The paradox is that you'll never find your life until you lose it for his sake. And the phrase for his sake punctuates many of Paul's epistles.

For his sake. For his sake. And I want to tell you that Paul was no non-entity.

He didn't lose his identity. He didn't become some lackluster piece of grey thing, a little piece of religion because he lived for his sake. Because he was so spent for God and for his sake, there never was a more formidable man on the face of the earth in stature, in fullness, in full orb glory of true man with true God as what Paul himself expressed.

That's what makes him an apostle. To the degree that we lose the God as the center, we move from the apostolic frame and we become something much less. I just want to point to what, though the text is very brief, each statement is like a sword.

It is sharp. It goes right into the kishkes. It finds its way right into the depths of these Greeks and finds them out and reveals their phoniness and removes their false posture.

To the unknown God, you phonies, you never really desire to know him. He's only unknown because you choose to have him unknown. He's available.

He's the God who made the heaven and the earth. He's the Lord of all. But God winked at your ignorance in times past.

But he's commanding. He's not making it an option. He's commanding men now everywhere to repent.

What an upstart. This Jewish pipsqueak. How dare he? On their turf.

Hey, shouldn't he have respect for them? I was in Egypt in Cairo and five times a day you hear the Islamic call to prayer with the loudspeakers that drown you out. It's right out of the pit of hell. Your hackles go right up.

You're preaching and your mouth is so good but you can't even hear your own words. You know what they do? They have planted these loudspeakers right by the churches. They have bought property right alongside the churches.

I was awake at five o'clock in the morning in a hotel room from the call to prayer. I could hear them in, breathing over the loudspeaker. It's a Muslim country.

They can do what they want. They can drown out and blow out the small bands of saints that are there. And in one of my messages I said something about this satanic thing, this Islamic revolution that is sweeping in.

The audacity to drown out the voice of God. And I was taken aside by a very sincere young Christian man. He said, you need to speak more respectably about other religions.

After all, we are intolerant. See how far the secular mind has gone? It's as if other religions have a validity that need to be recognized by us. I hope you understand the spirit of which I'm saying this.

I'm not saying we're going to go in and tear out their wires and thumb the nose. We love them. They're in a terrible deception.

But I'll tell you what, we reinforce that deception by treating it with a kind of respect as if it has a legitimacy and a value and not let them know that we believe that it came out of the pit of hell. But what does that say for the man who spoke to me like that, who's a leading Christian in that congregation? We need to respect other religions. Paul didn't have that attitude.

Plurality. Many paths to God is one of the most hideous satanic lies and deceptions. I spoke at the University of Ohio a few months ago and the first meeting was with an international student.

10% of the student body is from all over the world. There were men there from Red China. Instead of coming on tippy toes and being very nice and just expressing a certain Christian view for their consideration which should be considered with other views, I went right to the jugular vein.

I said every other faith is a lie out of hell that God has commanded that this gospel shall be proclaimed to all nations. Go ye into all the world. Preach this gospel to every creature.

It's not for the Jews alone. It's not for the western world. God intended it for China.

He intended it for Abyssinia, for Ethiopia. Do you think they were offended? They were leaning forward with such an intensity like, wow, this is the truth. Why haven't we heard it before and had to come to us in

a university setting? I had two audiences with a man from Red China who were so impressed.

He wanted to see me privately. I left him with books, with tapes, and he goes back to Red China to begin to infiltrate. And if ever we get to that country, it's going to come through a man whom we met in a situation when we spoke boldly about the God whom they ignorantly worship.

Him declare I unto you. If we think that we need to respect and not offend, we have allowed a secular attitude to subdue and to nullify the role that we ought to be playing to save men out of deception and death. Paul was earnestly contending for their lives and he was not mincing words.

Man needs to see that his religions have put him at the center and therefore it's a false center and that man is still the measure of all things. Do you know that statement? The axiom of humanism is that man is the measure of all things. What would you say is the adage of or the axiom of the spiritual mind? If the secular mind says man is the measure of all things, what then is the opposite statement of the spiritual mind? God is the center of all things.

But I'll tell you what, the world will never believe it until we not only say it but demonstrate it in which everything is such a revelation, so exhibits the fact that this is true. Since it says he himself gives to all life and breath in all things. What was Paul's proof? Since he gives to all life and breath in all things.

See that's either a nice piece of poetry, it sounds nice, or it's an awesome statement. You know why it was an awesome statement on Paul's lips? Because Paul lived in him. He moved and lived and had his being.

He gives to all all things. Before we take a break, I want to ask you a question. Do you really believe in an apostolic way, in a spiritual mind, that God gives to all things? If you don't, you'll never get up to Marsau.

You'll never be used of God in the significance that he intends and desires unless you believe he gives to all all things. Since he gives to all all things, do you believe that? Does that include unhappy things, trials, difficulties, suffering? When Paul said he gives to all all things, he meant all things. How many times was he left for dead? How many times was he shipwrecked and in the sea day and night? How many times was he stoned, beaten with rods? Where was his God then? Paul said he gives to all all things.

You know who else believed that? Job. He said the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Have you seen my servant Job? Have you found anyone on the earth like him? Perfect and upright in all his ways. You know why? He believes that the Lord gives all things. And if he gives, what can we do? We can either receive it and when he takes it away, he takes it away.

If we're going to stand before this world and confront them on the spiritual things that touch eternity, we've got not only technically to believe this, we've got to manifest it because it is so deeply part of our life and being. The all things that are bad as well as good. Do you rejoice for the suffering? Do you rejoice for the trial? Do you rejoice for the difficult time as coming from the same God who has blessed you and blessed your finances and blessed your fellowship and blessed your ministry and blessed your marriage? But what if he takes an infant? As I found in a conference I attended a few weeks ago, a woman's two-year-old son was burned in a fire in a community.

They got out and then, where's little Joey? They didn't know where little Joey was and the older sister who was supposed to be responsible for him had fallen asleep or forgotten or in the panic that he was up there

by himself and was burned to a crisp. What are you going to do? Curse God? Knock your fingers in his face and say, where is he? Which is exactly what the world wants to hear you say. Are you going to say, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away? It seems accident but surely God was able.

He's sovereign. After all isn't he the creator of the heaven and the earth and the Lord over all? Do we really believe that? And how do we make an exception for this tragedy? I don't understand it, but I don't have to understand it. He's not obliged to give me an explanation and I've got to praise and bless his name.

The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. The Lord gives to all. He said all things.

See Paul wasn't just crackling. He wasn't a little professional minister who had cheesy phrases. This was out of the totality of a life lived in a God who gives all things.

And Paul could take the beatings the whippings as well as the blessings of the use of God that for which he shall be eternally celebrated. And that's why God brought that man to that secular place. Another aspect of that is that do we really want a God who gives all things? Who gives all things? Hey, isn't there any room left for us? Can't I deserve anything or get anything or make anything because of me and my effort? You want to know what every religion is outside of the faith? Whether you call it Judaism or Presbyterianism or whatever name, it's a religion of self-effort.

Men want to do for themselves and obtain by themselves, but they don't want to receive from him who gives. Paul went right to the juggler and he knew those Greeks because they were men. He knew why they wanted a false religion.

Because they wanted to earn and obtain by their own works and their own efforts. It's the same issue today. Even within the church.

But Paul spoke of a God who gives to all, all things. What does that make us then? We can only be receivers. Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

They have nothing. Therefore God is able freely to give them all things. No pride.

But to whom does he give? To this man I will look. He who is of a broken and contrite spirit who trembles at my word. Somehow there's something in man that is vain that would rather do and perform and obtain than to come as a beggar to acknowledge his poverty and to look at a God who can only give.

He came to his own and his own received him not. But to as many as received him to them gave he the power to become the sons of God. This statement that he gives to all is unbelievably deep.

So let's just pause there. Have a little break. So seeing that he gives to all life and breath and all things.

Do we really see that he gives to all? Do you see that in nature? Do you see that in the circumstances of your life? Do you see it in the way that you personally made that he gives to all all things? Do we have a sense of the givenness of God? Or do we attribute things to circumstance or accident? Or we do not have the respect or the appreciation or the reverence for the things that God has given? You know to disrespect the earth, nature, the creation, or even God's own people. Do we really see them as given? As treasure? How privileged we are to be in fellowship with the people of God. They're given.

We didn't put an ad in the paper. Wanted people to come and join us in community or anything like that. They're given.

And they're each rich, precious in themselves. Do we really relate to each other and to nature and to drinking water and to breathing air and to enjoying good health and a sound mind as things that are given? If we do not, and I suspect that we do not sufficiently, we cannot say to the Greeks and to the secular minded as God who has given all things. See, the thing that makes Paul's word penetrating is that he so deeply believes it and lives as if he does.

That he has given to all, all things. Do we have a sufficient appreciation for the givenness of God? I'm praying that I would have this for my wife, for my children. It's the very area where we take things for granted.

For each other as believers in the body. For the fact that we have peace. That while we're talking tonight, there's not going to be a knock at the door and men with boots come in and knock down the chairs and yank us out by the hair and stick the police dogs on us and put us into jail without any knowledge of when we're going to get out.

Which is happening to other believers right tonight in different parts of the world. Are we receiving with gratitude in our hearts, thanksgiving in our hearts the givenness of God? Maybe we didn't recognize it as something given. We had our eye on a certain boy or a girl and it was going to be a beautiful romance and marriage and it's taken.

But do we see that as a provision from God that saved us from our own vanity? From the fabrication of our own mind. It was something given from God. To keep us even from ourselves and the messing up of our own lives.

I'll tell you what, maybe you need to be 50 years old or more to begin to have a sense of the givenness of God that younger people don't seem to have because there's a matter-of-factness and a taking for granted which is contrary to the spiritual mind. The spiritual mind sees all things as given and has thanksgiving in its heart for that which is given from God. Nothing is arbitrary, nothing is senseless, everything is given.

And that changes everything, doesn't it? What a difference if you think that things are just happening, just an accident, I couldn't help it, I guess that's the way it is, the cookie crumbles. I'm a victim as against one who sees all things as given and that every day is the Lord's day. The whole character of your day is changed.

The whole way in which you perceive reality and walk through it is altered because you have another mindset, another perception as being given from God. You can't wait for tomorrow. If tomorrow is going to be given by God in His sublime wisdom, perfectly appropriate in His love and righteousness for me and those with whom I'm joined, I can't wait to see that day unfold.

And if it comes in a disappointing way, or we didn't have the Sunday service that we could have hoped for, or the finances are down, instead of you yet rejoice in the adversity because it's not aimless, it's not accidental, it's not mindless. There's a God whose day that is in whom He's given this situation and though we don't presently understand it, we rejoice still and can yet enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. I tell you what, it may be the very reason that He's given you the hard time in finance or the marital difficulty, or your own kids acting up, or the problem in community or at school or job.

He wants to see if you'll be thankful and rejoice and enter His gates with thanksgiving and with His courts with praise. That's the whole reason for the test. Because it's the Lord's day.

This is the day the Lord has made. Because there's something to Him that's more important than your momentary happiness. It's fitting you for eternity.

That you might enter His eternal courts with praise. What do we read in Revelation? Every tongue, every tribe, every nation around the throne of man doing what? Praising Him. I tell you what, if we don't begin now, we're going to be very uncomfortable and out of place then.

We have got to enter into this mindset. We have got to come into this seeing and act and live and walk as if we really believe that. This writer raises this question, do we as Christians mentally inhabit the world presented to us by the faith as the real world? What world do we actually inhabit and practically walk in? Is what we believe on Sunday our technical religious vocabulary but from Monday on through Saturday we're living in another world, another mentality, another vocabulary, another understanding.

What world do we really mentally inhabit? Do we inhabit a world with a heaven above it and a hell beneath it? A world in which man is called to live daily, hourly in contact with the God whom neither time nor space can limit? Do we think Christianly? Does our personality bear the imprint of our attempt to live the spiritual life? These are the real questions. The spiritual mind is not a luxury, it's a mindset. Set your mind, Paul says, on the things which are above.

Have this mindset in you because our mind determines our conduct in our life. What is our thought? What is our attitude? What are the unspoken assumptions of our life? We may sing the songs but deep in our heart we're rankled, we're irritated, we're vexed, we're unhappy. This didn't happen right.

We don't like this because we do not have the mind of Christ, the mind of Paul. We do not inhabit that mind. This will blow you right out of your seat.

He says for the Christian mind, earthly well-being is not the summum bonum. That's a Latin phrase that means the ultimate good. What is the secular mind? For the secular mind, earthly well-being is the ultimate good.

How you feel, how you dress, how secure you are, how happy you are in your personal circumstances is the ultimate good in the whole purpose of your being. He says for the Christian mind, that is not the ultimate good. What a basic, absolutely foundational and radical difference.

If we don't think that our physical and personal well-being is the summum bonum, what is? Pain and death, he says, are not the worst evil. It is for those who are in the world. Eternal well-being is the final aim and ends of things here.

This means that success and prosperity within the earthly setup cannot be regarded as a final criterion, nor indeed can happiness within time be regarded as a final criterion. Why? Because your spiritual view takes something into consideration that goes beyond time, beyond earthliness, beyond your present feeling, beyond your health and beyond your happiness. It brings eternity into consideration and the God who dwells in eternity.

This is the foundational and basic difference between two mindsets and I don't know if we'll take this up next week but I want to say it now. He raises the question, how long can these two different absolutely

opposite frames of mind continue to go on without there being friction and conflict? Can I give you my little scenario for the end of the age for which we're rapidly tending? Why it is that we shall be persecuted in all nations for his namesake? Because we're going to be insufferable. We're going to be a presence in the world that the world cannot tolerate because we have a different mindset.

Because their concern for progress, social change, if we're able to do this, manipulate that, handle that, arrange that, we'll have bodily comfort, we'll have this, we'll have that. But there's going to be in the midst of people who have another seeing, speak another sound, have another set of values, see another purpose, who will be not just an irritant to be mildly tolerated but an actual obstruction to the progress of mankind. That it will be said of us what was said of him, it is better for the nation that one man die.

If we want to get this Jesus out of the way, then our religion, our rule, our mindset, our happy arrangement, our rabbinical Judaism, our temple practice, our alliance with Rome can go on unhindered. But this one guy, his strange doctrine, what he's about, the way men run to him is an obstacle that can only be removed by removing him. And it's for that reason that the love of many will grow cold.

We're going to find ourselves either moving toward a more radical position in God which will invite reproach from the world or we're going to find ourselves day by day condescending to the world and nodding our heads. Have you ever been with a group of people when they're making jokes, cracking jokes, and you're sort of like standing there and there's something almost involuntary that rises up in you in which you nod or you smile or you kind of chuckle or laugh to be one of the boys. But to stand there stone-faced, unmoved, not entering into their joke and the premises of their joke marks you as different.

We're making decisions every day right now, hour by hour and moment by moment of which we're not even conscious that is moving us to one pole or the other, either to an increasing accommodation to the world or a further remove and alienation from it, standing radically with the people of God. We need to be conscious of what is happening and the pressures and the kind of mind that we need consciously to have and to inhabit and to live and to have our being in him who gives all things. So we need to cultivate the eternal perspective.

It will not come to us accidentally. This mindset, this spiritual view, this alternative to the secular mind needs to be consciously nurtured, cultivated, sought for, contended for, held and consciously lived in or elusive. And it's going to go right against the grain of the entire world.

It's going upstream against current. And you'll only do it for one reason, for his sake, for his glory, because he's first. If you've got yourself as your first consideration, you'll never move against the current that is so forcibly going the other way.

So we're not talking about light things, but great things. And we're coming to a final collision between these two minds. So I don't want to send you discouraged.

You know why Paul could say these things to the Greeks? This is my final thought for tonight. I've just got to share this. That God gives all things and say it with credibility and with penetration.

In Acts 17, because you know where Paul was in Acts 16? Who knows where Paul was in Acts 16? In jail in Philippi. In the inner dungeon with his feet in the stocks, with his back cut with 39 strokes of the cat and nine tails till his flesh hung in ribbons. But it says at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God.

Because they did not look upon that beating and that humiliation and that imprisonment as an accident. They received it as a praise and as a glory that they were privileged to share in the sufferings of the God who had called them to Europe. That's why Paul could say to the Greeks in Acts 17, the God who giveth all things.

But when he says it while there's a bite, there's a penetration, there's a power, there's an authority. Not because he has some magical formula, but because when he had to suffer the things that God gives, he prayed and sang praises unto God. We have no more credibility, no more penetration, no more anointing, no more impressiveness to affect men in the world than to the degree to which we've lived through and experienced that which comes from the hand of the God who gives all things and still enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

Put on a spiritual mind and praise him. I want to pray a blessing over all of those who have come tonight. Okay, we'll end with a prayer.

Thank you, Jesus. Great Yeshua. Lord, the more we talk about you, the more we investigate your way, the more we see the splendid thing that Paul is, who is the very epitome of the expression of the incarnate God.

And hear the way he speaks and the way he confronts and what he represents. The more we rejoice, Lord, that by your grace we have been brought into a wonderful way. Lord, may we see, may our understanding be opened.

May we be free, my God, from the theories, the thoughts, the opinions, the subtle ways in which the world wants to subdue us and dull us and make us mediocre and just go along with a kind of Sunday religion sufficient for services. May we see the fullness of the expansive faith to which we're called and be able to proclaim it and demonstrate it to men with penetration, with force, because we are living in that frame of mind. Lord, I bless these children who have been here tonight.

May they leave with rejoicing. May they believe that their being here was because it's the Lord's day and this is the day that the Lord has made because he wanted them to hear these things, because he gave grace to a teacher to share them and gave us a glorious text that is not a fiction but out of the life of an awesome man who profoundly believed and walked out these things even unto death as did his Lord before him. May we walk also in this faith, my God, this true faith, this mind, this way of seeing.

Thank you. Bless these children and seal these thoughts in their hearts. May it affect their whole week, everything that comes before them and they see it in another kind of light and live in that light.

Bring us again for your conclusion next week, my God, we pray. We're so grateful for the way you've led us. Change us, my God.

Hallelujah. Save us out of selfishness and narrowness and self-centeredness. To glorify the God whose earth this is, who is the creator and the Lord both of heaven and earth.

We'll thank you and praise you in Yeshua's holy name. Amen.

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