

The Christian Mindset - Part 4

by Art Katz

The sermon calls believers to recognize God's sovereignty in all aspects of life and emphasizes the primary purpose of existence as seeking a relationship with Him.

Duration: 59:23

Scripture: Exodus 12:5, Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:22-23, Acts 17:24-25, Acts 17:30-31

Topics: "Mindset"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the clash between Greek and Hebrew ideologies, secular and sacred thinking, and the worldly mind versus the spiritual mind. The sermon focuses on the passage from Acts 17:24-25, where Paul speaks about the God who made the world and all things in it. The preacher emphasizes that Paul's message was not just theological theory, but a living demonstration of the Gospel. The sermon also highlights the significance of Jesus as the spotless Lamb of God who was sacrificed on the cross to take away the sins of the world. The preacher concludes by emphasizing the importance of truly seeking and believing in God, as He has appointed a day of judgment through Jesus, who was raised from the dead as proof of His authority.

Transcript

Everything that the Spirit of God is expressing through Paul to men is not only powerfully pertinent in that expressed moment, but it continues to reverberate throughout all time and history, and even to this hour. It actually might be said that it's more pungent now, more potent now, more significant now, at the conclusion of time and history than it was 2,000 years ago when Paul spoke it. But the elements are the same, nothing has changed, except that it has deepened and is being brought to a final collision and conclusion.

It's the Greek versus the Hebrew, secular versus the sacred, the worldly mind versus the spiritual mind. And let's see, last week we were on the 25th verse, well, it begins in verse 24, For 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. And just to review something of our concluding remarks last week, this thing about the God who gives to all, all things, can only be spoken by someone who really devoutly and powerfully believes that.

Most of us have not yet come to that place. We believe that God gives the good things, and we're quick to acknowledge and to celebrate that, but we have not yet come to a recognition that, as Paul did, that he's the God who gives all things, not only the things that are good, but the things that are painful, the things that are trials and difficulties and challenges and disappointments. And it's interesting that in these very days, even as these words still linger in our spirit, in our own Sunday service, an Indian brother got up to celebrate the God who gives and shared the testimony of how he needed a pair of boots and how the thought was barely in his heart when someone provided it and how he saw God's provision through that man.

And he was wearing them Sunday night and just celebrated God, stood in the middle of our room, in the middle of our service, and just rejoicing God as the God who gives. That same man witnessed the death of his own newborn son yesterday, the day after the Sunday service. And I said to Dana, who was there, if he will now yet rejoice as much in the passing of this child as he did in the receiving of the boots, he will be in the same place as Paul.

God is waiting for such men to come up to Mars Hill. Because we can say that there's the God who gives all things, but it will not mean anything. It will not have a penetration.

It will not be a credible, challenging, and compelling statement demanding the attention of men to that God, except that we really believe it in the sense that we are living it and has been tempted in our experience. So therefore, the Paul who says this in Acts 17 is the same Paul who in Acts 16 received all things from the God who gives when he received 39 lashes on his back, when he received public disgrace, when he was stripped of his clothing and whipped in the marketplace and thrown into an inner dungeon and made his feet fast in the stocks. If Paul did not believe that that was given from God, if he saw that as some kind of an unhappy circumstance, and where was God to have allowed it to happen to his choiceless servants, he would not have been in the next chapter on Mars Hill speaking the same thing to Greeks.

I hope you understand me. God is waiting for men who believe that they believe that they believe that there is a God who gives all things. I was just saying to Dina and Fred tonight, before we came to the class, how few believers there are who have yet really surrendered to the total sovereignty of God.

The evidence of that is in our disappointment and the way that we express it. We see that men are at fault, or circumstances are at fault, or we ourselves are at fault. If only we had done this instead of that, then something might have been changed and we don't recognize that there's an over reigning God supreme in the heavens who gives all things.

It's not an excuse for our indifference or our neglect, but we need to recognize that he's the God of all things, not only the God who gives the new boots, but the God who is pleased in his own wisdom to take away a child that is born, a child that was awaited, a son long desired, without giving explanation and without giving reason. When you can rejoice in the sovereignty of God in the things that are painful as well as the things that are pleasant, then you can stand before secular men and speak of the God who gives to all life and breath and all things. And if he gives life and breath, is he not also the God who can take away life and breath? If he's the God of life, is he not also the God of death? And if he's not the God of the one, is he the God of the other? And if he's not God of all, is he God at all? When God is talking about having a spiritual mind, this is what he's meaning.

Not that we just give lip service to certain credo or certain articles of the faith, but that deep in our total being we believe and the believing is expressed in our living. We live as if we believe these things of the God who gives all things. And he made from one blood every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

I think we just need to recognize what is being superbly expressed in a single moment of time to men whose whole life is given to hearing or to speaking some new thing. The scripture speaks about those who are always seeking after truth but never coming to the knowledge of it. I know these men because I was one.

It's a pose, it's a phony posture that celebrates and exalts man who thinks and presumes to be seekers after truth but never comes to the knowledge of the truth. But he's always in the process of seeking and while he's yet seeking he's fornicating and indulging himself, never coming to the truth, but always with a self-satisfying posture that at least he's seeking after the truth and wants to hear some new thing and to discuss some new philosophy. And here comes the Hebrew of the Hebrews, the man of God, and in one statement, chow, he nails it.

He ends all discussion and he tells these philosophers whose ears are always itching for novelty what is the whole purpose of life and being, namely, to seek after God if happily we might be found of Him. It's remarkably simple but I wonder how many of us in this room who are hearing my words tonight believe it. Do we really believe that the whole purpose of creation, the whole purpose of the earth and man on earth is not the establishing of fortunes or careers or national destinies or technology or comfort or security or success but to give mankind an opportunity to seek after God if happily they might be found of Him.

Paul has reduced the whole of human existence to one pursuit only, that the whole purpose of human life on this planet is for the purpose of finding God before we enter into eternity, either Godless or with Him. You know that that is distinctly the view of the Middle Ages which is dismissed by secular historians as the Dark Ages because they were primitive and simplistic in their view that they saw this life as a veil of fears, as hardship and suffering and trial but it was a preparation for eternity. That the whole purpose of this life was establishing a relationship with God that would continue into eternity.

That view has been dismissed in modern times and needs to be restored. Paul believed it and the question I want to raise is, do we believe it? And do we live as though we believe it? You know why we have not persuaded the Greeks that are about us? Because we do not live as if we believe it. We do not live as if we think that the whole purpose of our life is to seek after God and to find Him or to make Him known.

That's almost like a secondary consideration. If we have time, we'll go out knocking on doors or a night of evangelism or have a special series of meetings. We do not live as if we believe that God has structured the entire universe and this earth and put mankind on it for the single purpose that they might find Him.

And therefore our lives contradict our words. If we do not live as if we believe something, we need to understand that we do not really believe it. We do not really believe it apostolically.

We do not really believe it fully and for that reason the confrontation is still waiting. See, Paul is not just an individual in himself. He's the thing in himself.

He's apostolic man. He's the finest of God challenging the finest of the world. It's the sacred understanding versus the secular philosophy.

And what Paul represents in himself is a foreshadowing of a church that shall confront the modern world in exactly the same way that they're able to proclaim something because they're also demonstrating. They live as if they believe that the whole purpose of their existence is to encourage men to seek after God if happily they might be found of Him. There's so many other things that can be said here that will bug modern men.

That God has made of one blood all nations of men. Maybe that needs to be deeply impressed on mankind that is still racist or exclusive. I know that God has established not only the bounds of the habitations but even the distinctions between men even in their appearance that it serves a purpose in God.

But none of this is haphazard or accidental or something to be explained by anthropologists. Paul explains it in one statement. God has established the bounds of the nations making of all men from one blood and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitations.

This is so contrary to the free thinking so called of modern men that God has established all these things. God has appointed, God has determined. It is very restrictive.

It gives no latitude, no sway, no room for man to do his thing or to use this planet as if it's a toy or plaything for his purposes. God has appointed, God has determined. There's a fancy word called antinomian or autonomous antinomian man means self-willing, self-willed and against law, antinomian.

Man is against law. He's against God's law. He's against the restrictions that come from the law that God gives.

He doesn't want to be hemmed in. He doesn't want to be restricted. He doesn't want to hear that God has appointed the bounds of our habitations.

If men, if modern mankind really believed that today would there be a conflict in Israel between Arabs and Jews? God has appointed the bounds of our habitations, not man. It's not going to be determined at conference tables. It's not open to negotiation.

It's not something that will suit convenience. God has appointed that they should seek God if perhaps they might grope for him and find him though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being as even some of your own poets have said for we also are his offspring.

What a beautiful statement. In him we live and move and have our being. The question needs to be raised whether that can be spoken to anyone except by a person for whom it is true.

In him we move and live and have our being. And as I read that again today I thought of the phrase as even your own poets have said what I would have liked to have read was as even we believers have demonstrated. In him we move and live and have our being as even we believers demonstrate.

This isn't a piece of posy. This isn't a little flourish of words. It's a tremendous statement of the mystery of incarnation.

This is utterly supernatural. It is staggering. It is unwelcome to the ears of modern men.

They don't want to hear this. They don't want to know of such a possibility because they want to live and move and have their being in themselves. They don't want to be bound by their habitations according to what God has determined or fixed for the purposes for which he has appointed them.

And neither do they want to move and live and have their being in him. I just want you to understand and I'm trusting the spirit of God for this that every single syllable that is coming from Paul's lips is a calculated offense to the sensibility and the mindset of modern men who do not want to be restricted, do not want to be limited, do not want to have anything appointed by God and therefore they prefer to have their monuments to the unknown God because if a God is unknown so also can he not require anything. But the God who Paul represents, him whom you ignorantly worship, I declare unto you.

And when he declares him, he doesn't just say there's a living God. He says this is his nature, this is his purpose, this is his requirement. That's a declaration of God that men do not want to hear.

It's unwelcome. It's abrasive. It's not just that it's contrary to their opinion.

It altogether contradicts the whole foundation of all of their believing and the whole structure of their thought and their value system. In one fell swoop, in the space of these few statements, Paul contradicts an entire way of life and makes it invalid. We need to let that sink in.

This isn't just a little exchange of opinion. This is a vital confrontation and there's no room for middle ground. It's either or.

It's absolute or it's nothing. Which is so different from the temper and the way in which modern believers share their own faith. They offer it more as an opinion than they do as a conviction.

And in fact we have a lot of attitude to prevail in the world by which the other guy's opinion needs also to be respected. For even though we don't agree with it because we're believers and Christians, it has a validity that deserves our respect. Paul would never have gone for that.

That's pluralism. Many paths to truth. Paul is making it quite clear there's only one path.

And if you don't find it, you're going to be judged and suffer the eternal consequence. You cannot believe how masterful and how complete and how total this one statement is. If Paul and all of his Jewish genius had sat down and spent months in preparation for a day in which he would be confronting the Greeks at Mars Hill, he could not have done better.

What makes this so awesome is that it happened without preparation at all. There was no calculation, no human opportunity. Paul was brought by other men to Athens and while he was there, his spirit grieved within him as he saw the city, holy, given to water, idolatrous, and therefore disputed he in the synagogues with the Jews and with the devout persons in the marketplace daily that met with him.

Bang, bang, bang. It was entirely circumstantial, unpremeditated, unprepared. The message was unprepared, but the messenger was profoundly prepared.

Instant, instant, in season and out. Because what Paul was speaking was not a little brittle theology. Some views of four spiritual laws were how to witness.

Everything that came out of him was incarnate in him. It was the living word. Paul did not just proclaim the message of the gospel, he was the visible demonstration.

He was the word made flesh. He was an ultimate confrontation and there was not one Greek that day who heard him that shall ever be able to stand before God as excuse that they have not heard and they have not understood. Because they not only heard a proclamation, they saw the demonstration of these very truths.

And they heard them with a penetration and a power of conviction that can only come out of the mouth of one who is steeped in the reality of the things which he is proclaiming. That's what makes him an apostle. And it's with this witness, this apostolic witness, that the end of the age is waiting.

He says, and when the gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed to all nations, then shall the end come. What we see in Acts 17 and Paul at Mars Hill is a preview of final events. What is expressed in one man in Paul is a symbolic preview of the apostolic church itself confronting the modern world in a final and ultimate moment of collision.

That when the world will receive that witness and will reject it, there will be no further hope. Because to reject that witness is to reject the finest that God could present to man. The coming of Paul is the coming of God.

It is God incarnate in the man in the apostolic church. And if men refuse that, there is nothing more God can do in his mercy. Then shall the end come.

Some scoffed, and they'll eternally rue the fact that they scoffed. Some said we'll hear again of this matter, but they were just phonies. And some clave unto Paul and believed.

And one of the most melancholy verses in this entire 17th chapter of the book of Acts it says, so Paul went out of their midst. I'll tell you when I read that, there's just such a sadness that comes over my soul. So Paul went out of their midst.

I'll tell you that for all of the criticism of the church, for all of the contempt or disregard in which the church is held by the world and in our country, when the church shall go out of its midst, it will be a very pathetic and sad thing. Paul didn't continue to belabor the points. He didn't have to reiterate.

He didn't have to speak again. He had spoken fully, bountifully, anointedly. And when he saw that men scoffed and that he was being rejected, but some clave unto him and believed, Paul went out of their midst.

One confrontation with Paul is everything. You cannot ask for more and God cannot give more. And men will no longer ever be able to stand before God with excuse because they have received a complete witness and a complete man.

There's so much more that can be said and I'm just looking at some observations that I would like to make and know that I'm not going to be doing them any kind of justice. But when Paul says that the whole purpose of life is to seek after God, if happy that we might be found of Him, we need to realize that this contradicts the premises by which the modern world lives its life and even modern Americans written into our very constitution. That the whole purpose for our being is the pursuit of happiness.

Do you remember that? Well, that's okay for secular men to say what else should be their purpose if they're considering the life in which God is absent. But we need to understand that that is totally contradicted by Paul. That the purpose of men's existence is not to seek their happiness but to seek God.

If happily they might be found by Him. We can almost say that the happiness that is to be found outside of God is delusion and deception which the world is quick to provide as substitute. Unless some man comes in an anointed way to burst the bubble, to show the fallacy, to say that that is a wrong presumption, that that is not the purpose of our being.

There's another purpose. That God has established the bounds of our habitation and given of all men one blood that they might seek after God if happily they might find Him. So if I had a blackboard here I would put two things.

The secular premise is happiness, yours, men and the divine or the sacred premise is Him. To seek after Him or to seek after oneself. Can you see how the word of the Lord is like a sword going into these Greeks as Paul in these few statements just cuts right through to the heart of the matter.

He reveals, he lays bare what is the whole purpose and pursuit reason for our being. God is not only the creator and the Lord of the heaven and earth but He has established this. Not that we should have a revelry and a fun time or establish our careers or promote our interests or build our civilizations or do this or that or any other thing.

These are secondary addenda. The whole purpose of our being is to seek Him and it's evident that the church has not succeeded in persuading men and I suppose Paul was not successful in persuading all these Greeks but some clave unto Him and believed. That's not just a little chance expression that is rich in all of its meaning.

They clave unto Him and believed. They didn't subscribe to some abstract gospel. They didn't sign their name on the dotted line to a set of abstract precepts.

They clave unto Him and believed. And I think the point here is that you cannot separate the man from the message. If Paul contradicted his message if he said every right thing that the voice of his speaking and the spirit in which it was spoken if there was an absence of real conviction if he was living a life unto himself and for himself as most Christians do and though he spoke the right things they would have been completely unimpressed and unaffected but there were those who clave unto Him and believed.

To believe the man is to believe the message and to believe the message is to believe the man for the man is the message. He really believes that the purpose of our existence is to seek Him and the reality of the conviction even in the tone of his voice his face, his expression, his eyes that commanding and compelling thing that breaks the whole weight and thrust of Greek civilization in one confrontation rests on to what degree these things are real in the life of the man who speaks it. If he says the right thing but his life is a secret contradiction because he's really pursuing his own happiness there'll be no one to clave and to believe.

We just need to realize how grave and enormous that is because God has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead. We need at least another night, one more time just to dwell on this phenomenal statement. It is absolutely supernatural the resurrection from the dead.

It does not leave men any options because it does not speak about the resurrection as a vagary. It's not an abstract thing, it's not a theory. He's speaking about an actual resurrection with an actual man whom He has raised from the dead and this same man will judge all nations.

It's utterly supernatural and it is utterly specific and that combination is deadly to the secular mind. They do not want to be boxed in with something as utterly specific as this and that's why Jesus is a bone in the throat of the modern world. It makes God too specific.

It does not leave us any latitude. We can no longer then construct gods of our own imagining which men love to do and the way I've heard rabbis express themselves and speak of an impersonal power in the universe. Well, how convenient can you get? An impersonal power cannot require anything specific because He Himself is not specific.

But a specific God who in the form of a man was raised from the dead nails it and requires your allegiance to that man, to that resurrected one who is going to be the judge. It doesn't leave you any options in any house and that's what is galling to modern men who like to keep the spiritual thing in the realm of generalities that gives them plenty of latitude to seek their own pleasure and do their own thing. But a specific God forbids it.

It is supernatural, a resurrection from the dead and not just as an abstract concept but a particular man whom He has appointed having furnished proof to all men not just you, not just the witnesses in Jerusalem but to all men by raising Him from the dead. That the very life that comes out of Paul the boldness, the speaking, the spontaneous thing that is given on the spot through the life of God is the very demonstration that there is a resurrected and ascended King whose kingship and expression and love and conviction is pouring now out of this beggarly Hebrew vessel whom the Greeks despise and see as being beneath their contempt. Can you see how God has set the stage? The Greeks saw themselves as ultimate mankind.

They saw themselves as the epitome of the human race. They were the philosophers, the architects of civilization of all of the arts. And that strange band of souls out there these Hebrews who believe in Yahweh in a God, a personal God who speaks, who gives commandments that their allegiance was to Him that they did not speculate in philosophy but they obeyed commandments.

This offends the Greek mentality. And now one of them has even come all the way to them. The supreme expression of Greek civilization the Stoics and the Epicureans and this nothing to look at guy is speaking things so strange that they call him a babler.

And yet there is something powerfully compelling because the reality of the resurrection is in his very speaking and in his very demeanor. If it's not that, there's no proof to all men. And I think that this is the issue at the end of the age I've mentioned this before, is the issue of resurrection.

There'll be a false church and a true church. And I think one of the powerful lines of demarcation and separation is that one acknowledges resurrection as a truth and the other lives in it and demonstrates it. This writer Harry Blandmeier in the book *The Secularist Heresy* writes Surveil of contemporary movements in religious thought leads one to the conclusion that in the near future the dominating controversy within Christendom will be between those who give full weight to the supernatural reality at the heart of all Christian dogma, practice and thought and those who try to convert Christianity into a naturalistic religion by whittling away the reality and comprehensiveness of its supernatural basis.

Shall I read that again? I love the way this guy nails it. What is he saying? That at the end of the age there's going to be two religious bodies and the profound thing that separates the one from the other and makes the one the enemy and the victim of the other is the whole issue of the supernatural. The resurrection is eminently the issue of the supernatural.

Men may squabble about the issue of virgin birth but they cannot squabble about the issue of resurrection. It either is or it is not. And it was the proof even for the unbelieving disciples of Jesus who were slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had written that even when Jesus appeared to them in his resurrection body he said and yet they believed not unto joy.

There's something so profoundly deep in our human nature that opposes the supernatural that even when it is demonstrated we said, here, see, touch my wound, see my body. I'm not a spirit. I'm resurrected.

He came in through locked doors. He ate before them in his resurrection body and yet they believed not for joy because they were so stupefied. Their minds, their whole carnal, secular, worldly thing, the whole spirit of the world is so opposed to the supernatural God and has written it so deeply into our being that we boggle and stagger over the issue of the resurrection because it is the essence of the supernatural.

And even while we profess to believe we don't really believe. For us the issue is not whether we believe technically in the correctness of the dogma of resurrection but do we believe to the point where we are living in the power of it. Are we willing to stand before men on Mars Hill not on the basis of our cleverness or our preparation or our ability but his life.

The same Paul says in another place, for we are dead and our life is hid with God in Christ. And when his life is revealed our life shall be revealed also with him unto glory. You want to know something? And it's been bothering me for as many years as I've been a believer and have first come to understand these things and that is the painful absence of the glory of God in the earth.

Many correct believers, moral, nice, giving no offense, living nicely prescribed lives and models of propriety but where is the glory? I'll tell you where the glory is. It's in the resurrection. The glory is in the life.

The glory is in the power that comes when we are dead and hid with Christ in God until his life is revealed. And last week I tried to give a sketch of that. But my first experiment in walking out in faith trusting for the resurrection life as a high school teacher and new in the faith having read about the resurrection but wondering if it was still available and do I dare trust for it.

And if I come to the end of my own natural life, if I come to the end of my own resources, if I forsake my own strength and my own cleverness and just stand out there with my face sticking up willing to suffer the peril of there being no life and watching my students rise up out of their seats to gang up on me and get me will his life come forth? See the issue of resurrection is not a little doctrinal luxury if the issue of life or death will we have a faith that will trust the operation of that life in critically desperate moments. Not our wisdom, not our ability, not even our past experience. And the same brother who lost his baby in a home delivery part of the drama and the friction of what took place was a dispute between himself and another brother about the whole process of that birth.

One seemed himself as spiritual and not wanting any kind of human ministrations in the birth and the other out of a medical background wanting to apply his skill and his ability. And the two men unable to reconcile their differences until one finally left and in the course of which the baby was born dead. I'm not saying that that was a cause of the death, it might well have been but I think it would not hurt either man to see it as that and to see themselves as culpable and responsible and unable in a critical moment in the delicate balance between life and death to find the mind of God and what he was wanting and requiring in that specific moment.

Was he wanting the expertise and the knowledge of a medically trained person? Was he wanting the faith and the trust in the absence of human attention as was expressed in the other brother? Or was it some third alternative? The fact of the matter is that because of their discord and their falling out they did not obtain the mind of Christ. Guys, I'll go down on my knees. I'll plead with you to believe how grave and how enormously significant this issue is that I'm now mentioning.

The issue of resurrection is not yet a tenet of the faith to which we subscribe as true. It is the issue of life or death. Not only for ourselves but for others because by what wisdom shall Paul speak when he has a once and for all opportunity at Monticello? And what would you have spoken if you were with me this morning when I called a Jewish woman in North Carolina the wife of a professor at the university there, both Jewish, refugees from Germany who is now dying of cancer? What would you say to her having met her only one previous time when you introduced her to the issue of the faith and now two years later what was then a healthy woman and abounding in her own self-confidence is broken and despairing having learned from her doctors that she has an inoperable cancer and they give her only a limited time to live? What would you say to her? Would you give her nice words of consolation? Would you stumble and choke and splutter and try to reiterate the gospel hoping that she'll hear and believe? You know what we need to see? What we need to see is that every moment is life and death.

Every speaking is fateful. Every moment of relationship, every opportunity of witness, any opportunity for service is weighted with eternal things for which none of us is capable in ourselves. Do we really believe the operation of the resurrection life? That it's not just a phenomena that took place 2,000 years ago.

It had its origin there but it continues now to be available to as many as believe which means to say as many who are willing to be dead and hid with Christ in God until His life is revealed. You cannot command or exploit or use or manipulate the resurrection life for your convenience. It manipulates you.

It's not when you want it. It's when God is pleased to give it. And there'll be times when the most glorious things will come from your mouth.

Statements that you know you're patently incapable of expressing. But there'll be other times in the purposes of God when nothing will come and you'll just look like the fool. Weak, powerless and incapable of giving an answer and just an object for the derision and reproach of men which you could easily have said something clever out of your own ability to get by but you would have missed a moment for the glory of God.

Paul did not just speak of the resurrection. He demonstrated it in his speaking. He was eminently the resurrection man standing before secular unbelievers who have no notion of this dimension at all.

And some scoffed but some claimed unto him and believed. He was the demonstration of the thing proclaimed. As I mentioned last week about my one opportunity along these lines with this Jewish woman Pearl who some of the fellows have had opportunity to meet.

Today a precious believer. Eight years old in the Lord. What a testimony.

What a witness. What a spiritual woman. What a blessing to many.

But eight years ago what a pathetic spectacle and broken physical specimen of a sophisticated modern Jewish woman who had thrown her back out with yoga exercises and was in excruciating pain for years. She had gone through surgery and specialist acupuncture treatments. She was wearing an electronic

sensor device on her belt to do something in her back electronically.

Compulsive chain smoker. Every kind of thing that men can avail themselves in the world had availed nothing to alleviate her pain. She was so desperate eight years ago that she even allowed a friend to bring her to speak to me.

She would not so much have touched a Christian with a ten foot pole and would have dismissed a man like me as some kind of paid missionary or something of that kind. But she was desperate. And she came for I don't know what some comfort and the first words out of my mouth to her were an insult.

It was like Paul and Marcia. I perceive that in all things you're too superstitious. And I said to her, I perceive that you are so arrogant and so stubborn in your self-satisfaction that God had to reduce you to this in order to bring you to a place where you might consider him.

You know what she told me later? Those words toppled her right out of her chair. She was absolutely floored. She was expecting some kind of squishy, pious platitude, a little word of comfort.

And the first thing she got was a whack and a kiss because she thought herself to be a religious Jew. But the fact of the matter was that she was arrogant and self-sufficient and had no knowledge of God and nor was she seeking him. A professor, an utterly secular intellectual person whose Judaism was only a ceremonial and superficial addendum to her life began with an insult.

And we went on a conversation. I said, you know, I'm speaking tonight. Would you like to come to that meeting? Oh, she said, I'm incapable of sitting.

Fifteen minutes is my limitation. I can't sit. I'm in agonizing pain.

I said, may I pray that God will give you the capacity to sit? So she said yes. I think it was the first time she had ever been prayed for in the name of Jesus. I prayed that the Lord would give her the capacity to sit through an entire meeting and that she might receive the benefit thereby.

And she came that night. And I remember that night as one of, as an evangelical horror. It was just everything that was wrong was wrong.

There was a singing group there. When we all get to heaven, what a wonderful thing. With chartreuse covers on the microphone.

I mean, it was the most hokey and offensive thing. Like, it's the worst thing that you would ever want a Jew to come to hear. And there were people out there.

It was in a high school auditorium and in the dark cabin. And I can see the protruding guts of people having come from big meals and burping and looking up. They wanted a little novelty of a Jewish speaker.

And I was without a message. In that painful tension of being without a message while there's a woman sitting in the front row who was dying. Knowing that you would never again get it to such an occasion.

And what should you speak? And as much as my mind could race, I was absolutely blank. I had nothing. And I can't even tell you.

Yet this night when I spoke, I don't remember what I spoke. But when I was called on to speak, there was such a gasp that went out of me. Such a sigh before God.

Such a desperate cry. Lord, my God. This night is hopeless.

Everything is opposed to any prospect of communicating something to this unbelieving, secular, philosophical, intellectual Jewish woman. I don't even have a word. And look at the atmosphere.

So uncondusive to anything. And I don't know what to speak. And I came to that microphone.

And I opened my mouth, trusting. I can't tell you what I said. But this is what I remember.

That she stayed for the entire meeting. And she was impressed with what was said. And there was a second meeting like an hour or so later in the same room.

And in the hallway, sitting on the steps of the high school hallway, she said to me, she said, I'm a Jewish woman. This is contrary to all that I've been ever given to understand. I don't understand about virgin birth.

I cannot understand about resurrection. It is all contrary to my entire Jewish and philosophical upbringing. But, she said, I can believe you.

And on the basis of believing me, she took my hand and she followed me in a sinner's prayer for salvation. And she was saved. I just watched her pass from death unto life.

And she would not let me leave town that night until I found the place where I could baptize her. That woman today is no longer in pain. No longer a chain smoker or any kind of smoker.

A completely transformed life. A brand plucked from the fire. A blessing to God's people.

A grace and a witness and a testimony to the living God. And a challenge to many. And a personal blessing to myself and to my family.

Because though everything was contrary to her total Jewish upbringing, which is to say, her Greek upbringing, she claimed unto me and believed. I can't understand these things, but I believe you. And I'll never forget those words.

I've never again heard them. But it gave me a taste for something that I don't want to lose. And I'll tell you what, if we're going to not lose it and have it and obtain it and keep it and make it manifest, it's got to be consciously sought and believed for.

We have got to become the thing in ourselves. We've got to be a demonstration of what we are proclaiming. The word has got to be made flesh.

They claimed unto Paul and believed. So to read this letter's statement again, in the secularist heresy, remembering his contention that the word secular itself is heretical, that there should not be such a distinction, that there's nothing valid about it, that God intends the whole of the earth, which is the Lord's, to be sacred. He says, And those who try to convert Christianity into a naturalistic religion by whittling away the reality and comprehensiveness of its supernatural basis.

Paul preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. He preached Christ and Him crucified. It was the supernatural faith, it was the basis of all of his dogma, practice and thought.

He gave full weight to the supernatural reality at the heart of all Christian dogma, practice and thought. Are we giving full weight? And can we ever give full weight except we are living on the supernatural basis? Can we say that for me to live is Christ? In Him I move and live and have my being. You know what's remarkable about the word being? It's total.

It includes ministry and everything else as well. There are so few believers who have attained to this faith, to this resurrection, to this reality, to this supernatural basis, which may be the reason why we do not proclaim it to men. We do not preach Christ and Him crucified.

We do not speak of the resurrection or of the judgment to come, that God has appointed a day in which He will judge all men by that one whom He has raised from the dead. Those words would be foolish coming out of our mouths except that there was a corresponding witness of that supernatural reality as the one who spoke it. Maybe we need to take Paul's words to our own hearts that they're not only addressed to secular and unbelieving men, but to a church whose faith is only partial, that we need to seek after God if happily we might be found of Him.

Not for our salvation, we've already found Him for that, nor for our healing, many of us have already found Him for that, but for the resurrection life and the power which few of us have found and which needs to be found again and again and again and moment by moment. It is never a constant fix and automatic thing, but it is available as frequently as we're willing to be dead and to be head with Christ in God. You pray and give God an opportunity, as I did in the classroom, to cast my all on the reality of that supernatural resurrection and see if God will not do it.

Think of something that you have coming this week that is really demanding, which perhaps you could meet by revving yourself up and getting yourself to your full ability and handling it on the basis of your wisdom, your natural ability, your cleverness or your past experience. Then, knowing that, pull the plug, take the plug out of that source and come empty, come unprepared, come trusting, come not looking to yourself or your ability or what you know that you're able to do and just come as a bundle of weakness and foolishness and trust God for the operation of his resurrection life. His words, his manner of speaking, his conviction, his strength, whatever the situation, and see if his life will not be revealed unto glory.

Can you imagine when a whole church will live this way? Then shall the end come. This is the proclaiming of the gospel of the kingdom in the power of the king. And why will the end come? Because when the world will reject this witness, there shall not and there cannot be any other.

Then will the end come. Do you realize that if this is true, we are actually delaying the coming of the Lord. We are not hastening the day of his appearing.

It has to do with such a church moving in that kind of ability, in that kind of power. And it's not waiting for the final moment of confrontation to express itself. It's got to begin where we are now, that we might be brought to that ultimate place.

Paul was a tested and tried man. He was the full-orbed believer. He had served a history and apprenticeship in God that went from synagogues to the Gentiles, from the marketplace to the temple.

And when God had been so formed in him, he brought him to the ultimate place before these Epicureans and the Stoics. And so will he bring us also. Are we in the process of being brought? Are we presently moving from faith to faith, from obedience to obedience, trust to trust, more day by day trusting the life?

Can we say that the God who gives all things, because we can rejoice for the new shoes that we got and also the very next day still rejoice when the baby for which we waited is born dead and say, yes, God has given all things.

The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. That will be a true church and a true witness.

We know that there's been a historic controversy in Christendom between Calvinism, which believes in the superb, total sovereignty of God in all things, the giver of all things, and Arminianism, which sees the will of man freely expressed as the pivotal factor in life and in history. And my own opinion is that far from being a controversy, both things are true and strangely in the same time. It's not an accident that in these very days, in fact, Monday night, last night's Bible study in our own fellowship, the Lord quickened this verse in Acts 2 that sort of gave me a real insight into this issue about the total sovereignty of God and yet what is the place for the responsibility of man? How can that be reconciled? Because we know that God is sovereign.

He's the giver of all things, and yet what part does man play? And if there's no place for individual responsibility, there's no place for anything that can be called moral, how then can God judge all men? What is the basis of judgment if we have not an individual responsibility in the exercise of our freedom? And in Acts 2, in the sermon that Peter preached on Pentecost, we read these remarkable words in verse 22 of the second chapter. You men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, the man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know, him, here's the key verse, verse 23, him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain whom God hath raised up.

That's a remarkable statement that shows both the absolute sovereignty of God, of one who came by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God in a specific moment of time in an appointed mode of execution. It came at the very time at the eve of Passover when the lambs were being slain in the courtyard by the priests for the advent of that feast day. The Lamb of God was himself also being slain in exactly that hour.

In the first Passover, they were told take a lamb without spot and blemish on the tenth day of Nisan, corresponding to April, and keep it till the fourteenth day. You have four days to observe there would be any spot or defect in it because a blemished lamb cannot be used. And Jesus lived on the earth three and a half years, which in divine reckoning any part constitutes a whole, he was four years.

A day was as a year, so he could say to those who took him, which of you can convict me of sin? I am a lamb without spot and without blemish. And at the conclusion of his four years, so to speak, on the very day of Passover when the lambs were being slain, the lamb that was given to take away the sins of the world was also being slain by an appointed method of execution that had to be by crucifixion because as we said the other night, if he had been hung or shot or beheaded, the death would have come in an instant that was determined by men and not by God. But it says that he laid down his life.

No man takes my life, I lay it down. And we know that at a certain given moment on the cross he yielded up the ghost. And yet, though all of this was by the foreknowledge and the determinate counsel of God, the rest of the statement in the same verse says, you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

So God's sovereign will was being fulfilled even by the free will of men who were wicked in what they did. Can we understand that? Something was being performed in God that was perfectly appointed for that moment. And yet the men who were the instruments gave themselves freely to that use out of their own will and are morally culpable and responsible before God and therefore called wicked.

So as far as we are concerned in the earth, we need to see ourselves as being free in our acts. Therefore we live always in the tension of freely submitting ourselves to the will of God moment by moment. We are responsible for what we do or don't do.

Paul said we shall be judged for what we have done or not done in our bodies. And yet at the same time, God's sovereign will is being performed. It's a mystery, it's a truth.

Both things are true and at the same moment and only God can pull it off. So the sovereignty of God does not absolve us from individual responsibility. And yet, our individual life, our efforts, our failure or our successes, does not in one way hinder or affect adversely any single point in the program or the consummate wisdom of God in anything that has been affected from before the time that the foundations of the earth were laid.

Even this night and this speaking and this question in this moment is exactly in the sovereign will of God.

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