

The Christian Mindset - Part 5

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of believing in God's judgment and living as if we believe it, as well as the power of the gospel to bring salvation to all men.

Duration: 39:08

Scripture: Acts 9:4

Topics: "Mindset"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the power and importance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He describes a powerful atmosphere in the room as the words of the sermon penetrate the hearts of the listeners. The speaker also highlights the responsibility and judgment that individuals have in responding to the message of the gospel. He mentions a disturbing situation where children are being taken away from their Christian parents in Russia due to the belief that their faith is irrational and fanatical. The sermon concludes with a challenge for the church to proclaim the message of repentance to this generation, as time is running out and the purpose of human existence is being fulfilled.

Transcript

And I would not have been able to give you this answer if we had not in our own Bible study last night come to the same issue in the discussion of the death of this baby and the involvement of these men in their falling out at that moment of birth in the issues of responsibility and sovereignty. All orchestrated in a remarkable sovereign will of God and yet every individual free to act and to yield in obedience to what God is performing and yet responsible and judged. It's a remarkable thing and I'll tell you what, if you really believe this and live as if you believe it, you shall be accounted as insane.

And it's for this reason that even now babes are being plucked from the arms of Russian believing parents by a state and a society that says that they have no right to bring up their children in this kind of fanaticism and irrationality and superstition. That they're not proper parents and therefore the children need to be saved by the state from coming under the influence of this kind of insane view. And I want to predict and say that the hour is not far off when that kind of mentality shall prevail in western as well as in eastern countries.

It's increasingly believed now, especially by authorities of government and we're seeing already an increasing tension and disdain expressed through agents of government toward the church for being somehow increasingly a vexation and an irritation because of its inane, unrealistic, supernatural or

superstitious views. The end of the age is going to be a final collision between the Hebrew and the Greek, between the secular and the sacred. Those who profoundly believe the supernatural basis for life and those who reject it.

Therefore we cannot afford just to have the head knowledge. We cannot afford just to subscribe to biblical views because they're correct. We eminently to be a resurrection people because nothing less than this will prevail.

It's not just a mindset that God wants us to have but a mindset that results in acts and a whole mode of life and being. As a man thinks, so also is he. And what is our deepest thought? And in the unexplored areas of our life where we really live are our premises spiritual or secular? Are we really in our hearts pursuing our happiness or seeking God that we might be fond of Him or His purposes? Are we seeking His glory or our satisfaction? Do we believe that our life was appointed in moments of time and place for His purposes or for our own? Aside from what we say and our verbal expression and what we say amen to on Sundays, what is the truth of our ultimate premises of our true mind? Is it secular or sacred? That's the issue.

And it's not just the issue for us. It's the issue of those all around us whose eternity is being determined by what they observe in us and to what degree they're being challenged by what they represent. We can't pass without taking a look at verse 29.

Being then the offspring of God we ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone an image formed by the art and thought of man. Do you know what the ultimate presumption is? It's the complete reversal of what God gave from the beginning. In the beginning God formed man in His own image.

Do you know what's happening in the end? Man in his presumption and arrogance is forming God in his own image. And do you know that if we don't realize that you can do that even in the name of Jesus, you yourselves can be candidates for deception. Just because we all intone and speak the word Jesus does not mean that we all mean the same thing but the same speaking.

I'm not at all impressed when my mother or Jewish relatives would use the word God. I'm not persuaded that they're referring to the same God that I know. It's just a construct.

It's a three-letter word that suits their convenience, that has a certain kind of spiritual ring to it but it's the God of their own making. It's not a God who judges. It's not a God who has appointed a day in which He will judge all men by that one whom He has raised from the dead.

It's a God who is somewhere out there, some distant abstract entity, some higher power that somehow allows your fornication, your trafficking, your pleasure, your devices. It's a God of their own making. It is the ultimate idolatry.

Not according, Paul says, by the image formed by the art and the thought of man. When you just see Paul brought to a boil, this is the ultimate effrontery against God that the creature who has been graced by given a mind and even the powers of imagination and having something of the aspect of God in his ability to be creative has used these things in a perverse way to form an image of God which is not God and serves as a substitute for the living and the true God as an idolatry that suits the purpose and the convenience of men. Paul would foam at the mouth of this heinous and final effrontery and arrogance of men against God and would not allow it to go on without being challenged for a moment.

He's not impressed by their statues to the unknown God. You see, he's right through that fullness. If you don't know God in Christ, you don't know God.

He's specific. He's the God of supernatural. He's the God of resurrection.

And if you don't know that God and that Jesus whom he's raised from the dead, you do not know God. There's no pluralism here. In many pairs of truth, there's only one.

And woe betide the men who refuse to be found of it. And so he goes from there to the judgments. Therefore, having looked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.

I like the King James better. God commands all men everywhere to repent. No options.

He's winked in times past at your ignorance, but now the time is up. Whatever justification there might have been for your ignorance, they're no longer as recent because now there is a people in the earth who not only proclaim but demonstrate the reality of this resurrection. And God is bringing them into all the corners of the earth from Mars Hill to Timbuktu to Cass Lake.

And he's bringing his word to your radios and to your tape recorders if you're not there in person. He's commanding all men everywhere to repent. If Paul believed that and it was true 2,000 years ago, what shall we say now? If the time is running out and the historical drama is coming to its conclusion and we're at the last stages of human history, when the whole object and purpose of human existence is being fulfilled, that men might seek after God, if happiness might be found of him, what should the church now be saying to this generation? And yet where do we hear that he's commanding all men everywhere to repent? Instead of hearing that, we're hearing, why don't you accept Jesus? He has a plan for your life.

These are the benefits that you'll receive. We're not speaking apostolically. And therefore men are not cleaving unto us and believing.

I wonder if they're cleaving to a false god whom they've named Jesus, who's going to help them in the way that they want to go and find for them a boyfriend or girlfriend, help their finances or their health. But it's not a god that can only come to one through repentance. It's repent and believe ye the gospel.

There is no way to believe the foolishness of the gospel that God has calculated and made beyond the ability of any man to understand by his intelligence. The natural man cannot perceive the things of God, for they are spiritual. It is repent and believe ye the gospel.

Repenting is the key and the release to the supernatural grace of understanding which comes that cannot be obtained through your own intellect. He commands all men everywhere to repent. To speak this with boldness to Greeks, we just have to admire this, just have to see Paul standing alone circled about by these Greeks and speaking to them in no uncertain terms, hey, you guys don't have any option.

You might have had an excuse before I've come, but now that I've come, you're without excuse. Does your coming to men constitute that? When they've heard you and have seen you, are they without excuse? I remember when we went to Israel years ago as immigrants trying to keep our identity as believers concealed and just as Jews seeking to return to the land, we lasted three months because something happened in the Umpon where we were learning Hebrew with other immigrants from Russia and other countries. A kid was deathly sick.

He had a raging fever, 106, I don't know what it was. He was at the point of death. The doctors could not even so much as diagnose his illness.

And I looked at the Jewish brother who was with me, he looked at me and we knew what we had to do. We just had to pray for this boy, that's all. We said to these Jewish parents, do you mind if we pray for your son? They blinked.

We looked like two secular Jews, modern American Jews, and we're asking to pray for their son. The only prayer that they could ever conceive of is the kind you pray in synagogue out of a prayer book. But they were so desperate they said yes.

And we came and we prayed for healing in the name of Yeshua HaMashiach. We just took authority, we rebuked that fever and we commanded in the name of Yeshua HaMashiach to cease and we prayed healing and blessing in their life. That kid was restored instantly.

That was the end of our days. It wasn't long before the word got around, who are these guys, what do they believe? And we were trapped and finally we had to be evicted. I wanted to say something about that.

Why was I telling you that? I've given you the illustration, I've forgotten the point to which I was giving it. Lord, bring it back if it pleases you. Oh yes.

I said, does our presence compel men? Are they left without excuse because they have heard or they have met us? In the course of the days and weeks and months that we were there, I remember we were invited to dinner by a British Jewish doctor. The epitome of culture and a man, it's all that Jewish life can produce. He's the finest humanist and professional and he invited us to dinner.

And over the dinner table, I shared with him my testimony, how I was an atheist, a Marxist, an angry Buddha, vehement man, filthy, vile, how I came to a crisis of life and how I took a leave of absence from teaching in the course of which God was pursuing me as the hound of heaven across the world and how the word of God came into my hand in the New Testament in the supernatural revelation of first breathing and how God brought me to a congregation of Jewish believers in Jerusalem and called me by name and spoke into my heart and commanded me to remain and how in my first prayer four days later, calling on the name of the Lord, the spirit of God came into me as an anointment. And when I finished the testimony, this man said to me, oh, he said in his nice British accent, oh, he said, well, he said, that was fine for you. You had a crisis.

But I, he said, I don't have a crisis. And something welled up in me and I said, before I came, you had no crisis. But now that I have come and I've spoken, you have a crisis.

You have a crisis. I'm really sorry to make these references to my own life and experience, but I know that what I have tasted is what God wants as normative and definitive in the life of all believers, that our very presence, our very speaking, constitutes a crisis for those who don't believe and think that they have the option of other alternatives. Because God is commanding all men, all men, Jewish doctors, the self-satisfied, the smug, the content, the morally righteous, outwardly, to repent.

For they have rejected the knowledge of God, for which reason God has made of all men one blood that we might seek after him, if happily we might be found of him. And so, then he said, because he 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. I love a beautiful quotation that will always be with

me from a German theologian who said that true faith begins when the atheist thinks it ought to end.

Paul takes the most mind-boggling and offensive doctrine, the resurrection of the dead, of a particular man who should have no currency or value to Greeks and makes that the pivot of the whole issue of God and the issue not only of God, but the issue of judgment. The issue of resurrection also becomes the issue of judgment because God has resurrected him for the day in which he will judge all men. It's offensive, it cuts against the grain of modern thinking, but true faith begins where the atheist thinks it ought to end.

In other words, Paul did not try to present a scheme of God that would be presentable and acceptable to the thinking of modern men. He just let them have it right in the kisser. This is the faith.

It's supernatural, it's offensive, it contradicts your categories, your understanding, your rational beliefs, but this is it. Receive it or reject it at your own peril. And I don't think he stunned his nose at them or that he was disrespectful.

I think that there was a great heart of love that was continually pouring out of him in every word that proceeded from his mouth. But I tell you, it was sharp, it was challenging, and it was confrontational, but it was loving. He didn't soften the gospel, he didn't dilute it, he didn't seek to adjust it to their concept of their understanding.

He gave it to them as it is. And I tell you what, that's why Paul could say, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, the Jew first, and also to the Greek. And I have to confess that in my earliest days as a believer, I was somewhat ashamed of the gospel, of which Paul said he's not ashamed, because I was an intellectual, because I was a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, because I had a master's degree in history, because I understand modern men and their thought life, and so how offensive this simplistic and foolish gospel would be, that there was a God who lay aside his deity, took upon himself the form of a man, came and lived a 30-year life in obscurity, and began a little simple ministry for two and a half years in a little locale in Palestine, and was taken and crucified and slain, and it was believed that he represents a once and for all atonement, that by his blood and that faith of believing, we're saved from our sins, we're brought into a relationship with God forevermore.

I'll tell you what, that's not calculated to appeal to intellect. The opposite is true. It is calculated to offend intellect.

It is calculated to oppose the thoughts of men. Therefore, the only way that one can come to it, and believe it and receive it, is by grace. By grace are you saved, the same Paul tells us, and that not of yourself.

And that by faith not of yourself. Even it is the gift of God, of what then shall men boast. The gospel itself is the power of God unto salvation.

And I wonder how many of you are in this room now who are with me at the University of Minnesota. The last time we were there, in that big meeting room, when I preached the gospel, it was offensive as all get out. And I'll tell you what, to stand there and look out over that audience, and to see their sophisticated and intellectual faces, and to see some of the Jewish people that were there the previous visit to the university, who are bristling with indignation at you, and have an opportunity to speak things that could be clever, spiritually minded, sophisticated and challenging in a certain way, but the Lord said no.

This speak, the foolishness of the gospel, and of the issue of judgment, and of the resurrection from the dead. And in the audience was a man who has a national ministry of evangelism at universities, sitting there, listening to me for the first time, whom I've known for years. Everything was loaded.

Where you could either save face by preaching or speaking something that was presentable, or putting out all the stops and thrusting yourself on the thing for which Paul was not ashamed, the gospel of Jesus Christ, which itself is the power of God unto salvation. And that's what was preached. And I'll tell you, there was an atmosphere in that room that was heavy with God.

The words were penetrating. There was such a presence. We didn't see any visible crying out or repentance or someone coming over to pray.

We left that work with God. But the gospel went forth in the power of the Spirit. So he will judge the world.

I'd like to ask this question. What would be the consequence for society if men believed that? If mankind really believed that God will judge the world, if they really believed that, would history have been the same? Would men have acted in the arrogance in which they have acted? Would nations have caused the rivers of blood to flow? Would even today abortions be taking place wholesale? And plots and assassinations and acts of terrorism and all of the vain and stupid and pitiful and hideous things that are going on in the world if men really believed that God will judge? Paul said, He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world. No ifs, ands, or buts.

He will judge the world. And my question is, if the world really had believed that historically, would history have been other than what it has been? And my second question is, why have they not believed it? And we're going to be responsible. The church is going to be responsible for that question.

They have not believed it because we have not really believed it. And we have not lived as if we believed it. Are we daily living as if we believe we're going to be judged? Do we believe that God is a judge? Not some ruthless tyrant that pulls the wings from flies, but a God who rightfully has the power and the right to deserve and to require of us right living.

And when we're not observed and seen, what do we do? And when we have the opportunity to think the thoughts that we want to think, what do we think? And to contemplate what we want to contemplate, what do we contemplate? As if God does not know our every thought. As if we are not entirely transparent to Him. We do not live as if we really believe that God is judge.

Because if we did, our own life would be other. And the world is waiting to see it in us that they might believe that God also is judge. I think one of the most difficult things to persuade men is a judgment to come.

And if there's anything that has been the source of humor in family and women's magazines, it's some bearded character, Kanagir Stein, that says, repent for the end of the ages at hand. The issue of judgment has always been foolishness to the world. And I think that there's something in the way that Paul said it that was not foolish.

He will judge the world. So why is it that they have not believed that? And the next question, the last is, what will it take that they will believe that? What will it take that the world will believe through the church that God will judge the world? You know what Paul said to the Jews who are no longer here? He said, your blood is no longer in my hands. He actually believed that he had a responsibility before God, that the

blood of men would be upon his hands if he did not speak to them the whole counsel of God, which includes the judgment of God.

How many are we warning? Do we live and conduct ourselves with a gravity? Is there a certain daring about us that even when that's expressly speaking that subject, there's something about our whole demeanor that implies and suggests that we live in an awareness that there's a day not far off when God is going to judge all men. These are exclusive statements, specific statements, supernatural statements, from which there's no escape, no alternative, no options, and everything about them is opposed to the thinking of secular men. Paul was offensive in every point in particular because he preached to them the whole counsel of God, and yet some clave unto him and believe that God even mentions them by name, Dionysius and Damaris, a woman.

And it's just a remarkable thing that Dionysius means from Dionysus, the god of orgies and revelry and sensual gratification. A man who is named after that is the one who clave unto Paul and believed. That to me is more than happenstance.

It's just remarkably rich. And as I mentioned last week, it's this same one who is thought according to church history and legend to be the one who died in France, and he went also up to a hill to preach to pagans the gospel but did not come down from it, which today is called the Hill of Martyrs in Paris, or Montmartre. So I want to say in conclusion, as we come to the close of these days, do we realize that if we have a sacred mind, a spiritual mind, and live by it and speak from it, that we are going to be increasingly an offense to men about us, that we're coming to a showdown, a confrontation, and that there's going to be a collision, and that we would be fools not to recognize it and to anticipate it.

This brother writes, Where there is determinism, materialism, or unregenerate humanism, there is heresy. I love this writer. No ifs, ands, or buts.

Where there is determinism, materialism, or unregenerate humanism, there is heresy. Heresy is an ugly word with an ugly history. It follows that any attempt to attain doctrinal clarity and stability will bring to light a mass of heresies that underlie contemporary thinking.

You start to press this point. You start to speak this way. You start to challenge men and warn them of a judgment to come, and you're going to stir up a whole host of things, of heresies, all of the heresies that are contrary to God that underline modern thinking.

Any educated Christian who examines some aspect of our current intellectual inheritance with this end in view will inevitably meet with fundamental presuppositions which give a false account of man's nature and destiny. If he is honest, he will put his finger on such errors as he decries, and he must inevitably incur the obloquy specially reserved for heresy hunters. What he's saying is, you're going to catch it.

Men are not going to take this sitting down. You're not going to prick their balloon and sweep away the foundations of their false thought and their heresies and get away with it easily. See, Paul came down from our cell, but Dionysius never came down from his cell.

And I don't think that we ought to ascend up to any hill without giving a thought to the fact that we might not come down to challenge men in their false, anti-God heresies, because the love of the truth is not in all men. We're going to see two classes of men increasingly as we come to the radical end of the age, a small number who will cleave unto us and believe and fall at our feet and cry out, men and brethren, what

must I do to be saved? We're going to find a greater number, I think, who will be seeking to throw us over the brows of hills. We're going to experience contention and collision from those who will be opposed to what we say.

We're not speaking about an idle thing, about a matter of opinion, but something that will be cost to us. The same writer in his other book on the Christian mind writes, the collision between the Christian mind and a solidly earthbound culture ought to be a violent one. I like that kind of a man.

It ought to be violent. There's something terribly amiss that these different views somehow can collage this side by side in perfect peace and equanimity as if it's just a matter of differing opinions. Take what you like.

There ought to be a violent collision, he writes. In fact, the impact does not occur for the Christian raised aside the presuppositions proper to a supernaturally oriented personality. When he steps outside the sphere of specifically religious activity or of personal morality, he speaks the language of secularism.

You know why this collision has not occurred? Because we're Catholics, and once we come outside the church, we adopt again, we pick it up as if putting on our overcoats, the secular vocabulary of the world, and we have no point of difference with them in their mind, their attitudes, and their choice of words. Because we think that the sacred view only pertains to our religious life or to our personal morality rather than to all of life. Paul brought the thrust of God into the most secular place, and that's where it needs to be brought again.

And when it will be, there shall be a collision that is violent. We ought now to be preparing and anticipating those things. The specific reference to the supernatural, to resurrection, to judgment, are all calculated offenses to the secular mind.

And because they're specific, they give no out. They either require a yielding and surrender or a rejection. There's no neutral ground.

They are opposed to all that man desires who is autonomous and against law and something given from outside of himself because he wants to be his own creator, even to the point of creating God in his own image. He wants to create his own utopia, independent of God. He wants to make his own boundaries and use the world for his own purposes.

So we're not just talking about religious views. We're talking about the very foundation and reason for the whole purpose of being. That's what the sacred view is.

It is not, quote, a religious matter. It is a total matter. And Paul, with the incarnation of all that was spoken, is also a statement and a foreshadowing of the apostolic church that God is anticipating and looking for of an entire people corporately who will be expressing to the world in which they live in their generation what Paul expressed individually to men in his generation, either Jew or Greek.

And to reject that man is to reject God. To reject the messenger is to reject the message. To cleave unto him is to believe.

And then shall the end come. One encounter with Paul is sufficient to leave men eternally accountable. One encounter with Paul is to leave men eternally accountable.

It doesn't have to be repeated. To meet Paul and to hear Paul is to receive the whole thrust of God in pointed words, anointed and convicting, because he's the thing in himself. The apostolic equation is that proclamation equals demonstration, or demonstration equals proclamation.

It's not enough just to say the right things. They need also to be demonstrated. It's the truth made flesh.

How is it that Paul was not afraid? How is it that he didn't have a moment to think, hey, I might not come down from this hill. I'm not just rubbing these guys or irritating them a little bit. I am vexing them unspeakably.

I'm going against the total grain of law that they have thought and believed the whole foundation of their life to this point. I'm showing them that their whole life to this point has been a mockery and a fraud and something entirely false and men don't want to hear it. And that's why they put their fingers in their ears and gnash their teeth against those who bring them the word of truth as they did to Stephen.

And how is it that Paul didn't have the thought that, hey, this might be my appointed moment for martyrdom as it was Stephen's by speaking the truth to men who are not wanting to hear it but to stop their ears. How is it he was not afraid? That he could speak to them about a God who will judge all men. He was not afraid of men because he was afraid of God.

That's why. Because the fear of God, which is to say also the love of God, constrains him and will save us from the fear of men. The boldness of Paul was not some kind of Jewish attribute.

It's the expression of the same life that gave the power and the words which he expressed. The righteous are as bold as a lion. And if God chose to take his life that day on martyrdom, so what? If God was finished with him and that's where his life was to end in glory in some final demonstration and articulation of the gospel, would Paul have grieved? Because he said that he was rising and chafed by having to live in this earthly tabernacle, in this tent, he would much rather to be in the presence of the Lord.

But God had appointed him a certain length in the earth until his purposes were finished. There was no fear in Paul about the time of his demise. He knew it was appointed of God even as Jesus knew it.

And the question is, do you know it? When Jesus was submitted to Pontius Pilate, one of the ultimate Roman authorities, and he said, don't you know that I have the power to spare your life or to take it? And Jesus said, you would have no power at all except it were given you from above. Because Jesus believed and Paul believed that this is the God who gives all things. Do you believe it? And if you believe it, you'll go up to any hill fearlessly.

Because the issue is not the hill and the issue is not men. The issues of life and death are with God in his time because he's the giver of all things. And until the moment comes that he's chosen to give, we can live fully to that moment in the apostolic way, speaking and serving according to what the life of God is prompting from us.

Oh, my, my, my. Paul and Marcel, I love him, I love it, and I know that it's a timeless word for God's church and a picture of what God is preparing us for at the end of the age. Paul stood in the midst and said.

So let's just conclude with a word of prayer. The incarnate man, the apostolic man, the demonstrator of the thing that is proclaimed, the supernatural evidence before men, not just as a vague generality, but as a mode of living and being. In him I live and move and have my being.

Not only as your own poet said, but as I'm demonstrating right in front of your face and letting you hear right now. Thank you, Jesus. Lord, my God, we stand in such awe of this masterpiece of apostolic man that Paul was.

And we know, my God, that the grace that was available to him is available also to us if we choose also with him to know nothing except Christ and him crucified. If we choose to pull out the plug and to forsake, my God, our own sources, our own life, our own meager ability and wisdom that enables us to get by, I will radically and totally trust this glorious resurrection life, the wisdom of it, the beauty of it, the power of it, the truth of it, the appropriateness of it, Lord, that we might be before our own unbelieving generation what Paul was to his, that their blood shall not be on our hands. And we just invite you, Lord, who has chosen to speak this theme to us in these days, to fit us, my God, with a spiritual mind.

Again, we repent, Lord. You're commanding all men everywhere to repent. We repent to the degree that we have yielded to secular views, worldly views, tolerant of different opinions, that we're men of opinions more than men of conviction.

And we somehow allow others to languish in their opinions as if somehow if they're equally as valid with ours. And we don't want to be looked upon as presumptuous or arrogant or contentious or dogmatic, that terrible, dirty word, that we would be somehow narrow and dogmatic and not broad-minded and liberal or tolerant. My God, give us the mind of Paul, which is to say give us the mind of Christ, and give us the grace, the ability, the life, the power, fearlessly to express it.

Wheresoever it shall please you to bring us. Let it begin, my God, tonight and tomorrow where we presently are, the area, my God, that you've given us now to move and to live and to have our beings. May we trust you for words, trust you for grace, for expression, trust you as the giver of all things, the wonderful God whom Paul proclaimed.

May we also proclaim him to a generation that would prefer to have him unknown. Thank you, Jesus. Feel these things in our hearts, Lord.

Bring us to this place. We'll thank you and praise you. Bless, my God, the words of this night.

May they have a wide circulation to the blessing and to the challenging of many, to the awakening of many from their sleep, to the raising of those who are dead to God by the words and the life which you've given. We'll give you the praise, the glory, the thanks, the acknowledgment in Jesus' holy name. Thank you.

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