

The Inadequacy of Ethics

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon explores the inadequacy of ethics without aligning one's life to the perfect will of God as exemplified by Christ.

Duration: 53:02

Scripture: Matthew 16:23, Matthew 17:17, Mark 4:40, Luke 24:25, John 1:47, Romans 3:23, Colossians 3:4

Topics: "Ethics"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his own inadequacies and failures in preaching the word of God. He shares a personal experience of a Jewish woman who came to him seeking answers and guidance. Despite his doubts and insecurities, he allowed her to come and engage in conversation. Through their interaction, the woman and several others were saved and brought into the kingdom of God. The speaker emphasizes the importance of not striving to be sharp or cryptic in our approach, but rather to rely on God's wisdom and guidance.

Transcript

Let's pray together. Precious God, we just thank you for your infinite mercy, Lord, and that you know, Lord God, that we're dust, and you know what our frame is. And just, mighty God, wash us in the blood of the Lamb Jesus from every subtle taint, Lord.

And we just affirm in your hearing and before the children of God that we will not receive the insidious thoughts of the enemy quick to be critical and to fill our ear with all kinds of suggestions. We thank you, precious God, for the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. We thank you for the wonderful work of reconciliation which you are performing.

We thank you for the assemblage of these souls, Lord, whom you have brought from near and from far, every one, choice, appointed, particular, and no one here by happenstance nor accident. We thank you for the work which you are developing, line upon line and precept upon precept. We thank you for what you're doing into us, Lord, upon our beds, even through the night hours.

We thank you for this precious Jewish professor, Lord, whom you delivered into our hands last night. And even as he's in the synagogue this morning, mighty God, may the words which you spoke out of my mouth from last night continue to bite into his soul, particularly the remark of Jesus before Abraham was, I am. Bless his soul and save him to the uttermost and make of him mighty God.

Wonderful choice instrument in your hand. And continue, Lord God, just to bring into these meetings, off the street and as you will, the appointed souls of God. And now, Lord, have your way with us in this hour.

Breathe your precious spirit upon the words which pleases you to speak. Enhance our understanding and deepen us, Lord. Change us into your image.

We'll thank you and praise you for it. In Yeshua's holy name. Amen.

This is an unusual practice for me to come with sheets of paper and notes, but part of what it means to be obedient to God, when my personal delight is to be spontaneous and just go off sailing into the blue, and the Lord pleases to do something more disciplined than, in that moment, I need to be the more disciplined speaker. We're on the subject of character in God's end-time man. I want to quote a writer with whom many of you are probably not familiar, an English writer of the 18th century by the name of William Law.

A book of his has recently been brought back into print called *The Power of the Spirit*, and the title is deceiving. It's far more than what it sounds. It's a clarion call.

It's one of the most penetrating and comprehensive statements of the faith in such integrity and incisiveness as I have not found in other writers, with the exception of the one who wrote on the two covenants. What's his name? Andrew Murray. In fact, Andrew Murray was greatly inspired by William Law.

William Law says, the whole nature of virtue, and we can just substitute the whole nature of character, consists in conforming to the will of God. The whole nature of sin is declining from it. There is nothing wise, holy, or just except the perfect will of God.

Can you say amen to that? Now, I have a dear Jewish brother who has come to this conference, much to his wife's chagrin who had to be left behind in California, their first separation in their marriage, and someone has graciously volunteered to pay her round-trip fare to bring her to this conference. How many of you think it's a great idea? You're all wet, every one of you who raised your hand. What makes you think so? Oh, it sounds good, and it's a lovely thing to do, and it'll placate this wife, and appease her, and alleviate her distress, and she'll be reconciled with a husband.

But you silly kids, how do you know that God didn't want her to remain in California and stew in her juices throughout these days, and do something deep in her life, and you would have obstructed the plan of God in these days. Didn't you hear a word that God said last night? Right away your hands shot up like rabbits. Is that what you call obeying the perfect will of God? Oh, dear children, he's not a goody-goody Santa Claus, and I have been the recipient of his grace over and over again, but I've also received other things from God which well-meaning people would have sought to spare me.

God saved me from the well-meaning believers. The whole nature of virtue consists in conforming to the will of God, and the whole nature of sin in declining from it. There is nothing wise, holy, or just except the perfect will of God.

And there shall be many things that shall commend themselves to our understanding that shall seem utterly groovy and beneficent, that we would not even think to hesitate to do, which might be utterly out of the will of God. And by like reason, there might be things that offend us, that go wholly against our grain. We're not the kind of person to speak that way, or it would seem that it will be thought of as being insulting.

And that is the perfect will of God. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them, and no other. Watchmen need give some wonderful illustrations of this principle, of how he felt that he ought to go and reprove a brother who was definitely out of line.

And there was no question but that this brother needed correction, and he had even a scriptural mandate to do it. And P.S., if I could include a little footnote, I've seen more damage done by so-called men of God in their mandates than I would care to recollect. And so he took himself to this man's door, and he knocked on the door, and he was really going to really straighten him out.

And when he lifted his hand and knocked on the door, it just went absolutely limp. The life of God was not in it. Another time he says that he went to a Chinese Christian fellowship, and they were somehow feeling guilty that they were not striving to propagate the gospel.

They had no evangelistic outreach, and shouldn't they be proclaiming the gospel in the world, and didn't the scriptures clearly invite us to do so? He and they concluded that God had not yet released his life through them for that purpose in that moment. A lot of us think that we have a blank check given of God, and we fill in the terms according to our own pleasing. But there's a God who wants us to abide in him and to dismiss our own human notions of what we think, right or wrong, good or bad, and as Matt said, to cleave and to eat only from the tree of life.

If his life is not in it, however it might commend itself to our understanding, however it might think to be a tremendous thing, it is evil. I always do that which pleases the Father. To abide in Christ, who is the image, the expressed image of God, and be conformed to him, will not leave us as moral vacuums wondering what we should do and whether it's right or whether it's wrong.

You say, Art, how is this going to affect the daily quality of my life if I trust Christ in whom I abide to be the character of my life? Well, can you picture a Jesus who is late for commitments, which many of us are? Can you picture Jesus would allow his room to be a pigsty, drop his clothing on the floor, be sloppy in his work, indulge his moods, cut corners, get by, cop out, appease or evade, be haphazard, sloppy, indulgent, excessive, frivolous, flirtatious, depressed, moody, lazy, shabby, mediocre, soft, undisciplined? There's no way that we can conceive that the Son of God can be any of these things, and if he is formed in us for which Paul travailed, we should see the absence of sloppy rooms, sloppy work, haphazard, slapdash lives, and all of the other kinds of things which are as a plague in the body of Christ. I'm becoming more and more concerned with small things. Last night we quoted from the Peter who spoke about our sharing and being partakers of the divine nature, and the same William Law goes on to say, let a man beware of setting a standard of life lower than Christ's.

I'll tell you it may sound like a terrific thing to provide a round-trip ticket to a bereaved wife to be joined with her husband, but it may be lower than God's intention for her in these days. The world might applaud your generosity, and it may be a seeming act, but it may be wholly out of the will of God. And now I'm saying that, I'm not saying that it is.

This particular act might be in the will of God, but we are not to determine that because it sounds to us pleasing at first hearing, or like the right thing to do, but that God by his indwelling life in us has witnessed this is the way walk ye in it. If I had hours I could tell you about the unconventional dealings of God in my life that would blow your mind and say that I violated every rule and principle in the evangelical guidebook, and there's not one iota of doubt in my mind that it was the living God in Christ himself who prompted me

to speak and to do it. A recent illustration I'm giving in speaking across the country is how oftentimes when I'm sitting on planes I don't speak to people alongside of me.

You say, Art, what are you, some kind of recluse? You're not sociable? No, I'm not, and I'm not anything else either. I long ago made it just a covenant with the Lord that I'm not going to try to be witty, charming, personable, or any such thing, because for 35 years I lived on such impressive natural endowments and it came to naught. I came to God as one out of death.

One broke back from the dead and I said, Lord, accept you be my life, which includes being my winsomeness, my charm, my sociability, my gregariousness, my conversational ability. I am nothing but a gray blob. Now you're laughing? How would you like to make such a covenant and find that there are times when God will allow you to be the gray blob and you'll be wholly unimpressive and you'll turn red in your face and you'll be hot under your collar and at the most excruciating moments when you just itch to put your best foot forward, God says no.

And you sit there like an inconspicuous lump because it pleased him that you should be dead and hid with God in Christ until his glory shall be revealed. Are you willing to abide by those terms? It can get awfully sticky and awfully embarrassing. There's a lot of dying in abiding in Christ.

In this particular case, the plane was just about to embark and the last passenger got on, a black girl, very attractive, and sat down right by me. And the moment she sat down, something in my spirit went boing! And before that plane came to place the taxi to take off, I was coming on like gangbusters. You would think that I was a man who had not spoken in a year.

This was my first opportunity to verbalize and I was coming out in a torrent of words. And what words they were? Sharp, painful, cutting. And this girl was growing increasingly irritated with me.

She told me that she was a graduate student in psychology from the university in the Chicago area. And I said, oh really? I said in an almost mocking tone, what hope do you think that psychology offers for a distraught mankind? And she would tell me in her little vain humanistic way and I would take it and go, snap! And she'd make another statement, I'd go, snap! Finally, we're 30,000 feet up and she told me, me first, then my black people, then mankind. She was a black militant.

I thought, oh yeah, oi vey, mankind. If I got sucked out of this plane to my death 30,000 feet below, you wouldn't so much as blink an eyelash and just turn the next page of Vogue. I turned to her and I said, what do you think of the Bible as a guide for conduct in life? Well, boy, did she bristle.

That's Uncle Tom's religion, she said. And I can't recount the whole of my conversation with this girl, but every word that went out of my mouth, penetrated, it cut, it got beneath the skin, it was teasing, it was provocative, it was cruel. And finally, this girl was so exasperated, she couldn't take it.

And she turned to me and she said, if you'll not stop, she said, I'm going to call the stewardess and have your seat changed. All of a sudden, the blood flowed to my head, my face turned beet red. It was the first time that I can remember being embarrassed, I think, in all my 11 years as a believer.

And all of a sudden, it occurred to me, how would it appear if a stewardess had to come and take me by the hand and change my seat? Reverend Arthur Katz, sitting next to an attractive black girl, there wouldn't be a doubt in the mind of any passenger why my seat was being changed. You know why I'm telling you this, children? This is a picture of end-time obedience. Your mouth will be stopped when you think you

ought to speak, and your mouth will be opened when you would much prefer to remain silent.

And in your speaking, when he is the author of it, you'll find yourself in ungainly situations, speaking things you would never have presumed by yourself to have uttered, and it's going to cost you embarrassment. Would you believe it that in that very moment, a blonde woman who was sitting on the other side of the black girl and had been overhearing our conversation, with a cigarette dangling from the corner of her mouth, with a lipstick over her lip line, mascara and peroxide blonde, with a big fat cross hanging on her bosom, leaned over and beyond the black girl and me, she said, yeah, she said, why don't you leave her alone? My heart leaped up in praise to God. I said, thank you, Lord, for completing the picture.

It's beautiful. The unconventional end-time ministries of God manifested through servants who have no life unto themselves, for whom it's all the same to be silent as to speak, by those who are not willing to receive the ministry and are ready to bring you into embarrassment and worse for it, and at the same time to suffer the reproach from a world that doesn't give one whit of concern for the salvation of that soul, and will tell you about the Jewish people, yeah, why don't you leave them alone? Call that Christian love? Why don't you leave them alone? Haven't they suffered enough in the Holocaust and struggling to preserve their Jewish identity in Russia? What are you trying to do, make Christians out of them? Call that Christian love? Anti-Semite? And the very same people who were quick to raise the hand to say that it was a good idea to bring this wife round-trip free will be the first ones to wither and have their Adam's apples bobble and cop out. The same ones who would be the first to pick up the check from the breakfast table without thinking even to ask whether God was the author of that act.

Let us beware lest we set a standard of conduct and life lower than that which is in Christ Jesus. He is the perfect Son of God. Now you know what I did, children? I made a survey, quick survey, I think I went through one or two Gospels, of the ungainly things that the perfect Son of God said and did, of whom I'm suggesting that he should be the life of your life and the of your character.

Yet a survey of his statements and acts would contradict every conventional reckoning of what the world applauds as moral character. How is it that you sought me? The young Jesus child said to his distraught parents who were naturally concerned for the loss of their son and who had left them behind in Jerusalem, how is it that you sought me? Didn't you know he said that I should be about my father's business? Why if any snot-nosed kid spoke like that today we'd give him the back of our hands. What do you mean, why did I seek you? I'm your father and your mother, that's why I sought you.

Is that any way for a Jewish kid to talk? Later on the same son said to his mother, woman, what have I to do with thee? Who is my mother or my brethren, Jesus asked when his disciples told him that his mother and his brothers were outside? Who is my mother, my brother? It almost sounds like icy indifference. Let the dead bury the dead, Jesus said to a compassionate son who would have undertaken the simple human decency of burying his own father. How many of us would have the courage to have uttered that to a man in a like situation? Let the dead bury the dead.

Man, you keep talking like that, your reputation isn't going to be worth a damn. I'm not come to send peace, but the sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father and a daughter against his mother.

And I could see the disciples just getting all itchy and ants in their pants and just wanting to put their hands and clap it right on Jesus' mouth and say, hey Lord, Master, shut up man, you're blowing it. We're advertising you as the Prince of Peace. Hey, how about your image? To a Gentile woman who came with

a motherly concern for a demoniacal daughter and wanted the ministry of this Christ, Jesus said to her, it is not meat to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs.

To the most religious men of his generation, Jesus said, generation of vipers, woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, you fools and blind, you serpents and generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell? How many of you would say that in witnessing to a modern day Pharisee, Jewish or Gentile? But you want to know something children? That's right. There's a living God, I believe, who would still say those things if he had a mouth as available to him in this generation as he had in his first son. How many of us would stop short at being a mouthpiece for incisive speaking because of the fear of the reproach that would instantly fall upon our heads and for the fear of the way we would be perceived of men, even Christian men? Jesus cursed the fig tree, overthrew the money changers' tables, and delayed coming to the home of Lazarus till after his death.

There are a lot of unconventional utterances and acts in Jesus's life. What did Jesus say to his disciples? Get thee behind me, Satan, he said to his principal disciple. Thou art an offense unto me.

You stink, you savor the things which are of men and not of God. On another occasion, oh faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I suffer you? On another occasion, how is it that you do not understand? On another occasion, how is it that you have no faith? On another occasion, oh fool slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. On another occasion, behold an Israelite in whom is no guile.

What is he saying about the host of other Israelites by implication? Sharp, cryptic, unflattering, insulting, tactless, undiplomatic, unconciliatory, provocative, unsentimental, offensive, direct. And every syllable had its origin in the heart of the father. There's nothing that disgusts me more than the schmaltzy sentimentality that attends the word love.

And I think it's a great embarrassment for the children of God that sometimes even secular sources can instruct us where we've missed the boat. I'm very fond of quoting from Hamlet in a scene when Hamlet confronts his mother. Do you remember the woman who married the murderer of her husband? A sensual woman, mindless.

Hamlet returns from school to find his noble father killed and the crafty uncle who had been the architect of his murder is now sleeping in the same bed with his mother. And in a fantastically powerful scene, Shakespeare brings the two characters together. And the son confronts the mother and he grabs her by the scruff of the neck and opens the locket that is on her bosom and shows her the two pictures that are placed there.

Look, he said, here is that husband whom you once had. He was a Hyperion, a satyr, a giant, a picture of nobility. And here's the picture of him whom you've now married, his murderer, crafty, ambitious, vain, sensual, filthy.

And he just pushes the locket right into her face and she cries out, Hamlet, she said, no more, no more. And then Hamlet says, sometimes one must be cruel in order to be kind. How many of us would be a Hamlet in such a situation if the life of God prompted us to such incisive speaking? We always automatically assume that the thing which is kindly, sentimental, nice, approved, applauded, affectionate is the loving act.

But I'll tell you, when Jesus called Pharisees hypocrites, whitened sepulchers, dead men's bones, that was an act of love. Love is a beneficent act intended for the good of another, coming from a person at cost. Make that the standard of your measure and not the palpitations of your heart, and you'll find yourself on a different foundation altogether.

My Lord never did anything unloving. And sometimes the most loving thing to do, as God will prompt it, is to cry into a man's face, hypocrite. Now is this an invitation for us after we leave this room this morning to go out in the streets and engage a Jew? Is it a hypocrite? That would be just as wrong as schmaltzy sentimentality and fawning and sloppily falling all over them.

It's neither the one nor the other. It's only what the life of God by his Spirit in any given moment will prompt in you. Listen, children, life is nothing more than the accumulation of moments by moment by moment.

Have you ever thought of that? You're not being groomed for some great epical event that's going to come into your life at the end of the ages. But moment by moment, the indwelling Christ is wanting to speak and to do his good pleasure and will through you. And I always assume in the absence of any other direct voice or hearing or leading, and that I believe with all my heart by faith that my life is not my own, that I've been brought with a price and brought back from the dead, that my speaking and doing and being is of God.

That it was not my fanatical nature that was coming on like gangbusters with that black girl, but a living God who chose to speak to her in the way that he did. And I can multiply the illustrations. I can tell you of eight days of meetings at a university in the Midwest that shook the place from stem to stern, powerful penetration of God.

And the Jewish kids on the campus were so outraged that I was invited at the end of those days for a debate at the most prestigious Jewish fraternity house at that campus. I was to debate the professor of comparative religion, a Gentile who spoke Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. And the Christian kids were inviting me and said, cats, do you think you can handle this? Why, sure, I said.

Surely not. I can no more handle this than I can handle anything else. And the same God who has been bailing me out in every previous encounter will do so now or I perish.

And I went that night with my heart on my mouth, and I'll tell you, those kids were hanging off the chandeliers. You couldn't find an inch of space. They were jammed in.

They had come to see the comeuppance of cats. He was going to get it. Hallelujah.

We'll teach that brash Jewish hot shot. Well, they only made one mistake. They let me speak first.

Or I might say they let him speak first. And in the first word that came out of my mouth, a holy hush fell into that jam-packed room, and men were stunned to silence. And after a half hour, I saw these Jewish kids nervously elbowing this professor and saying, hey, aren't you going to answer this, man? And he got up, and he made one or two lame and apologetic intellectual remarks, and he left like a cur with his tail between his legs.

No contest. Well, I saw Jewish kids move to such rage and fury that night. Well, how would you like it if you were applauding yourself about being a philanthropist and a humanist, having a wonderful life, successful in your studies, foreseeing a career upon graduation, and then as you began to make money,

you were going to give to Jewish charities and to Israel, and you were going to be philanthropic.

And all of a sudden, some guy comes and crashes in upon your consciousness, and you didn't even invite him, and he's telling you it's all wrong, that it's against the way of God, and God says, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things shall be added unto you. And it's a revolutionary thing that stuns the guy and threatens to turn his life completely around, and fills him with all kinds of forebodings and fears. Oh, what will my parents say? He's so angry and bitter, he's ready to kill you.

And I saw a guy storm out of that room that night. That meeting lasted six hours. It was a marathon.

And they went out and discussed and slammed the door, and two minutes later, they came back and took another seat. They hated it, but they loved it, and they were too Jewish to miss it. At 10 o'clock, a guy got out of his seat with spittle at the corner of his mouth, and his eyes glazed.

His fist knotted, his knuckles were white, and he took careful steps, and he walked up to me. I thought, uh-oh, this is it. And that guy stood trembling like a leaf with rage and frustration and things that can't even be described.

Cats, he cried out in the hearing of hundreds. If what you're saying is true, and your God can save, I defy him in this moment to do it. Put up or shut up.

Where are your four spiritual laws then? I have no alternative, children, but to be cast upon the mercy of God always. Jesus said, I speak what the Father gives me to speak. I opened my mouth, and you know what came out? It was as if the Lord had taken a big Turkish towel and dipped it again and again in a basin of ice water.

He saturated it. I mean, it was oozing. It was cold, and he twisted it, and he made a lethal weapon out of that icy towel, and he cocked it back in my arm, and when I spoke this one line, this kid got cracked right in the teeth.

I said, you need not think that you can receive anything from God. Your spirit stinks. Oh, is that what they taught you in Jewish evangelism? You know what this kid did? He blinked his eyes a few times, and he sat down just like a lamb in the seat.

A half hour later, he was the first one to be saved, and 14 others followed him into the kingdom of God in tremblings and weepings that I shall never forget. There are moments in God, children, that our minds can never premeditate. There are responses from God that we would not ever in an eternity of thinking ever been able to conjure.

There are responses from God that shall offend men and seem to be harsh, critical, injurious, immoral, calculated to bring life because they're life-giving and have their origin in the heart of God. Of this one whom we just described as being sharp, cryptic, unflattering, insulting, tactless, undiplomatic, unconciliatory, provocative, unsentimental, offensive, direct, the Father said, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. The point is that we should not strive to affect the character that is sharp or cryptic, but that we should not strive, period.

You got that? Are you suggesting that I ought to be this kind of a believer, that I ought to really contend with men, and I ought to slash them if they need it, and I ought to... No oughts at all. How many... I wish I had a dime for every person that's come up to me to ask me the same question, how should I witness to a

Jew? What is this, the age of technique? And I'll give you a formula. I said there are times when you'll roar like a lion, and there are other times when you'll bleat like a lamb.

It has not to do with your natural temperament, your inclination, or your mode of responding, but only to do with Him who is the life of your life. When it pleases Him to roar, you roar, and when it pleases for Him for you to bleat like a lamb, you bleat. It pleases for Him to speak, you speak.

Pleases for Him to be silent, you're silent. Give me an illustration of when you're silent, I can't believe it. Okay, I'll give you a recent instance, and I believe that there's a chap in the room today who was with me who can document it.

I was recently in a southern city, and I was taken by a couple of Jewish believers and another Christian man to have lunch with a Jewish man who needed to be saved. He had just come out of the hospital and miraculously saved out of death, but he was a very tough nut, a hard cynical man, and they thought, oh, we'll say cats on him. Cats will really handle him.

We came, we sat down to lunch. I had no preconceived notion of what to speak or do, just making myself available to God, and I had not very much to say, and this man was going on, and there's a point in the conversation when he turned to me and he said something about my receiving a free lunch. Oh, I said, quite on the contrary, this is one of the most expensive lunches I've ever eaten.

How do you mean? I said, because I can't abide your blasphemous spirit. He was mocking, he was cynical and blasphemous, and I said so. This man was waiting for me to come on strong, and I don't think that I spoke to him three sentences in the entire course of the lunch, and I saw the nervous looks of my Christian brethren who had invited me thinking, oh, when is cats going to do his thing? Well, when is cats going to come on strong and really give this guy what he needs, the real zats? I was absolutely silent, children, because when God is not speaking, nor do I speak either.

How many of us have cheapened the gospel by our own silly and foolish prattling when men are not hearing? And I believe that I have set in course many of my Jewish kinsmen on a path to God by my refusing to speak with them. You say, what do you mean by that? I mean, I can think of many instances when I've been brought together with a Jewish personality, and I begin to talk with him, and I sense right away what his spirit and attitude is, argumentative, disputatious, wanting to win, not wanting to know truth. And I turn on my heel, and I walk away, and I've left those men stunned, looking at me with their jaws dropped and their eyes like saucers saying, what is this? I thought this guy's going to argue with me.

It was my unwillingness to cheapen the gospel that made them understand for the first time that there's a value in this that perhaps they need to explore. On another occasion, I spoke in a church in Kentucky on the two Judaisms of God. It was a powerful blast of God.

And that day, a Christian woman brought her Jewish unsaved husband, and she wanted him so to be impressed to hear another Jewish believer. And man, I'll tell you, it was a fierce talk, the kind of talk that at the end of it, when you stand by the door and the church lets out, people come and shake your hand and thank you for the nice message, and others walk by and give you that uncomfortable look like, well, that guy walked by and he didn't even, as if I didn't exist. I was a loathsome piece of scum after that message.

I thought, well, I really blew it today. So later on, they took me out to eat. And what do you think? The man was there with his wife in the same restaurant.

Directed by the Holy Spirit, my chutzpah aided and abetted by his anointing, I picked up my knife and fork and plate and cup and saucer. And I went and moved myself to his table. You ask my wife or anyone who knows me how prone I am ever to do anything like that.

And we had a conversation that lasted until four o'clock in the afternoon. And it began with him doing all the talking. He told me what a great guy he was, what a great philanthropist, he's a lawyer, how he goes to bat for the underdog.

And he said, surely if there is a God, he doesn't care what you believe. Anybody can believe anything. It's you do that counts.

And as far as doing is concerned, I do this, I do that. When he finished with his gospel, I began to share with him God's. And by four o'clock, this man's face had visibly changed.

Drawn, gray, bloodless, lips trembling, his voice was not as self-assured as it was. Too Jewish to suffer defeat. He was at least going to come out with a draw.

And as we stood to take leave of each other that day, he stretched his hand over the table. He said, Artie said, I really appreciate you. You're evidently a man of integrity and zeal.

I'll tell you what he said. You acknowledge my opinions and I'll acknowledge yours. Okay.

You know, it came out of my mouth in that moment. I said, brother, so long as I have breath in my body, I shall persuade you to forsake your opinion and adopt God's. For if you will not, you shall surely perish.

Slash. You want to know something, children? That was the greatest act of love that any believer had ever performed for that man. What is God saying to us? We mustn't be ruled by our own understanding.

We mustn't be little shallow moralists or ethical culturists. We mustn't be New Testament believers living Judaic ethical lives, thinking, is it right? Is it wrong? What should we do? How shall I look? How shall I appear? What? But holy to live your life in him that you might say with Paul for me to live is Christ in him. I live and move and have my being.

We should not strive to affect the character that is sharp or cryptic or any other thing, but simply we should not strive, not affect, but be godly character is the distinctive response of God through Christ in us in every given moment of need. 30,000 feet up in an airplane, over a dinner table in a restaurant in Louisville, Kentucky, at a Jewish fraternity house at a Midwestern university, on the street, in the community, wheresoever, in every given moment, godly character is his distinctive response through Christ in us in every given moment of need, however upsetting. I thought I'd better throw that in if I was going to be fair to you, because it often will be.

Are you ready to be as one brought back from the dead? Ready to be dead and hit with God in Christ until his life shall be revealed? Having no life to yourself, willing to be a point of offense if it please God that you should be. In the same verses in Colossians, it says that when his glory shall be revealed, our glory shall be revealed with him also. But I'll tell you children, if you're not willing to wear the crown of thorns, you shall not taste the glory either.

You know what most of us have settled for? We've fallen short of the glory of God. We're well-meaning, we're conscientious, we're studious, we say and do the right things, we're pleasing and applauded, but

we've fallen short of the glory of God, because we've been unwilling to accept also the other crown that goes with it. And I'll just shut up after this one last illustration.

Right here in this city, City College of New York, the Lord led us to have a gospel outreach. I say the Lord led us, and I'll just append Matt's remarks. A newsletter is atrocious, and other literature except it be prompted by God.

But if it is, it's a holy thing, and I've experienced the anointing and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in as much writing a newsletter as I have in preparing a message. In fact, I've had many people say to me, your newsletters read like epistles. The whole thing is, what is the point of its origin and inspiration? That outreach in City College of New York was not some thing that I had dreamed up in my own skull.

Man, wouldn't it be great? 85% Jewish, right in the Jewish mainstream, and we'll do something, and it'll be explosive and strike sparks, and the fire will ignite, and it'll be taken from community to community. We've needed to break through the Jewish mainstream. And even now, there are many of you itching in this room to do something evangelical and maybe upset God's time schedule altogether.

That was called of God. I met with the InterVarsity students at a meeting in that college, and the Spirit of God came down the room. We were left weeping.

We spent weeks and months in preparation. No amount of money was spared. Posters, and flyers, and fastings, and prayer.

And the night before, the great day was to come. I was in Boston at the Boston University speaking, and staying up till four o'clock that morning, speaking with the Jewish Brotherhood invited me about the Holy Spirit, thinking, well, Katz, you don't need your rest. His strength is made perfect in your weakness.

And I flew into New York the next day and was driven right to City College, and the room was jam-packed. I was late, waiting for me to speak. And what an atmosphere.

You could cut it with a knife. I mean, there was hostility and bitterness so thick that you'd have to be a fool to miss it. Yarmulkes all over the place.

Beards, Van Dykes, Jewish rabbis. I mean, they had come out in force. Well, I knew that the Lord was going to handle this.

Hadn't he done it at the Jewish Fraternity House? Hadn't he done it at Harvard University? His glory was going to be revealed. I was in a place of perfect obedience. I had not designed this.

This wasn't to advance my career. And I leaned on the Pope, and I opened my mouth, and with the first sentence, I knew that I had had it. Something limp fell right out of my mouth and clunked on the floor.

It was the most pathetic, weak, vain blah that I believe that I had ever uttered. There was no unction. There was no anointing.

And I knew that I'd had it, and I did not know why. I had fasted and prayed. I can't tell you how much.

And after a half hour of the most pitiful presentation, I opened for questions and answers. And the first one on his feet was the Hillel rabbi. Did he ever give it to me? With his Van Dyck beard and his yarmulke.

He got so excited, his yarmulke kept slipping from side to side. And he worked me up one side down the other. He showed what a nincompoop I was, a fool, an ignoramus.

I didn't speak Hebrew. I brought a Goyish Bible, the King James Version. And I was trying to persuade sophisticated Jews with my medieval notions.

And didn't I know what Jews had suffered for 2,000 years in Jesus' name? I mean, he did a job. I was left for dead. And he stalked out of the room.

When his heels clicked on the floor, the whole room shook. And when he slammed that door, and the moment he stopped, another Jewish guy got up and continued where he left off. And then another, and another, and another, and another.

I was cut to pieces. And I'll tell you children that the most painful thing of all, the most cutting thing of all, was not the harsh, angry responses of my Jewish kinsmen. I expect that.

I'm often the target for the compressed anger and bitterness that has been 2,000 years in the making, which first needs to be released before men can hear and respond to the love of God. They've had no opportunity now until you presented them to let go of their anger and their bitterness. So I'm used to that.

But the most painful thing of all was to look in the faces of my own Christian colleagues and see the disappointment written there. Cats, their faces said more eloquently than words, we thought that you were an anointed vessel of God. Hey man, we thought you had a calling for university ministry.

What's the matter? Weren't you prayed up? Couldn't you even fast? And I could not explain to them a word because God himself was not quick to explain it to me. He's not always there to make nice and to coddle and to placate and immediately to appease. There are times when it pleases God for us to stew in our own juices.

And did I ever stew for three weeks? I was like a sick dog. I couldn't lift my head. How did I presume ever to think that I was called to ministry? Where did I ever have the presumption to think that I could speak to my Jewish kinsmen? What a dunderhead, what a futile man, and what a weak and inadequate grasp of the scripture, and what a colossal failure in moments when the stakes were high.

Man, go back to the teaching profession and make a living and forget it. For three weeks I couldn't lift my head until I got a phone call one night. Mr. Katz, can I come over? A Jewish woman, I could barely discern her voice, it was so feeble.

Sure, I said, come. She said, I have some questions that maybe you can answer for me. I thought, man, I'm not able to answer anybody, but you want to come, come.

She came, a woman so nervous, so thin, that she was transparent, veins sticking out, compulsive chain smoker, stubbing out one cigarette after the other. I said, how did you come to me? How did you hear about me? And what are you doing here? Well, she said, three weeks ago my son was at City College, and he said that a Jewish man came to the school and stood and simply shared his convictions, and the moment that he finished, he was mercilessly attacked, and my son was enormously impressed, because this man answered back not a word. Instances, when shall please God to you such, but not in the measure that which we have thought.

No religious cliches, no spiritual laws, or affected spirituality, or even quoted scriptures. Just a precious expression of the very life of God wrought in a man in God's place, in God's time, a mouthpiece for the living God. The character of God was wrought in him.

It was not done in a day, and I think of the other great saints like that, like the very Elijah whom I quoted at the beginning. It wasn't very much to look at in the physical, I don't suppose, but stood with unswerving boldness, without an iota of trembling, before the dreaded despot of his day, and said, as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand. One of the few men of his generation who knew so much as that there was a living God.

He said that a Jewish man came to the school and stood and simply shared his convictions, and the moment that he finished, he was mercilessly attacked, and my son was enormously impressed, because this man answered back not a word. He had said he had never seen such an exhibition, and he picked up a book of yours that was at the school, and brought it home, and read it, and insisted I read it also, and now she said, I have these questions. Two hours later she came to the end of her last question, snubbed out her cigarette, and bowed her head, thin, overwrought, distraught, and called upon the name of the Lord, and passed from death unto life.

One skinny Jewish woman. There was a lot of dying children for that one life. It pleased God to make me a mock, and a scandal, and a point of offense, to save one life, when I would much prefer to have come on like gangbusters, and been bright, and sharp, and impressive, and really quote, and bring forth, and really zap it to them.

But there are times when God shall call us to be dead, and hid with Christ in God, that when his life shall be revealed, our life shall be revealed with him in glory. Are you willing to accept the one that you might have the other, and be brought into the image of God? Sharp, and incisive when he chooses to speak so. Soft, and conciliatory when that is his purpose.

Silent when there is not to be speaking, and speaking when he bids you speak. For we're brought back from the dead, and we have not a life unto ourselves. You know, I have a sneaky suspicion that if we lived a life like that, that this is the definitive quintessential Jew.

This is messianic Jewishness. The most Jewish son of all formed, expressed, and made manifest through us. Praise God, you don't have to be born Jewish to be it.

Bow your heads with me, will you? Gracious living God, how we love your way, mighty God. How we're flush with embarrassment, even to think of the years that we've spent as believers, in so much foolish striving, and prattle. So much activity, so much nonsense, so much spinning of our wheels, seeking to do for you, as if you needed to have someone to do for you, who have created the heavens, and the earth, and all that in them is.

Mighty God, may we understand deeply that for us to live is Christ. And that in his life are all the things that pertain to godliness, to character, to virtue, to ministry. That we might say with Paul, in him I move, and live, and have my being.

Thank you, precious God, that there's a great mystery in this. That Paul, who is so perfectly the expression of this, was so distinctively himself. And that we also, if we shall be willing to lose our lives, shall find that we shall not be papier-mâché saints.

We shall not be little tin puppets. We shall not be little Jesus's echoing and sound chambers. Thus saith the Lord.

But in the distinctive accent that you have given us, in the distinctive configuration in which you have made us, your life shall come forth to reveal your glory through our speaking. Thank you, mighty God. Through the variety of all these precious flowers, in different shapes, and sizes, and hues, can go forth the life-giving quality of God.

In speech that is in keeping with their personality, the shape that you have formed, and the place where you have called them to express it. Thank God that we're not all Art Katz's, or Matt Schwartz's, or Mike Evans's, or any single thing else, but that we are what we are by the grace of God. May you from this moment forth, mighty God, have the perfect and whole possession of it.

For your glory is our prayer, in Yeshua's holy name. Amen.

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