

The Making of an Apostle

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon explores the nature of true apostleship through the lens of Paul's teachings, emphasizing the importance of divine authority and the pursuit of God's glory over human approval.

Duration: 1:11:54

Scripture: Isaiah 46:10, Matthew 6:33, Acts 9:1-2, Galatians 1:8-10, Galatians 1:15-16, Revelation 1:8

Topics: "Apostle"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of crying out to God from the depths of our being rather than living superficially. He warns against receiving messages from men and encourages seeking what can only come from God. The speaker criticizes the reduction of faith to a formula and urges believers to express the grandeur of the gospel rather than cheaply expressing it. The sermon also highlights the need for believers to contend for the faith and not be influenced by the self-conscious spirituality of the present age.

Transcript

Are we on? Yeah? So, Lord, we bless you, thanking you for the day that you have made, that you're a God of purpose and intent, nothing aimless, my God, but all divinely calculated works to walk in before the foundation of the earth were laid. And we ask, my God, that work, that fulfillment, this morning and today. To whom much is given, much is required, Lord.

We know that. And yet we're asking that much be given. So come, my God, and surprise us and give us more than we could have imagined.

And let it be a vital impartation, Lord, to the life of this people, to this work, to have enduring consequence, and something foundational. So we bless you, Lord. Come, my God, by your Spirit, revive us, send the Word into our midst, the living Word, and receive now already our gratitude for such blessing and such privilege.

Thank you, Lord. Be the Alpha and the Omega of this day and this time. You began it last night.

And continue, my God, with the conclusion that you have in mind, as the God alone who knows the end from the beginning. We thank you, Lord. We're privileged.

In Jesus' name, amen. Well, you can turn to the book of Galatians, chapter 1. So this will be a first for me. I don't know that I've ever shared from this book or this portion, but something that was quickened in my early morning time.

And we know that the substance of Galatians is Paul's jealousy over the purity of the faith that has been threatened by Judaizers and those who have sought to require of Gentile converts certain acknowledgements like circumcision that would controvert the gospel and rob it of its grace. So that's the general setting, and that's why I think Paul takes pains to establish his own qualification as an apostle. Are we going to be listening to that all through? Let's read from chapter 1. Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.

So as we read, we're not only reading a statement of Paul appropriate to the Galatians, but read this also as a pattern and as a paradigm. Paul is not conscious of what he is setting forth in his word that would be applicable for all generations. He's thinking only of instructing Galatians, but every word that issues from him is a pattern, paradigm, of what pertains to that which is apostolic.

So right from the first crack, Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father. He's concerned to show that his credentials are in God alone because he has rivals who also purport to be apostles and who are making a grand show of it. And so the issue of recognizing who, in fact, a true apostle is is not just an issue of ego or vanity, but the issue of preserving the integrity of the faith.

And so Paul is going to show that what he is and what he expresses is from God and not from man. And if that's required for the apostle, it's equally required for us. And to the degree that we have condescended to men, we weaken or threaten or contradict that which is apostolic in its character as coming from God and by God, that it might also be for God, which is really in some kind of opposition with the tenor, T-E-N-O-R, of our charismatic age, which I think is exceedingly man-centered and approval-centered and crowd-centered and has not this exclusive and jealous and sole insistence upon God.

So we're going to find this reality again. We'll have to find it as Paul sets it forth. And this is what makes Paul Paul, this single-minded, singular jealousy for that which comes from God and is for God and is not in any way tainted or corrupted by man.

So, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead and all the members of God's family who are with me, even here in a kind of an unconscious way, Paul can't help but throwing in a reference to the resurrection, seeing that that phenomenal miracle is foundational to the whole reality of the faith and of the church. He's not self-consciously employing it. It seeps out of him.

This is out of the genuineness of his apostolic character that he cannot help but even inadvertently in passing making reference to the resurrection of which he is so much himself the expression. If Paul is anything, he's the man of the resurrection. So to the churches of Galatia, grace to you peace from God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age according to the will of God and Father to whom be the glory forever and ever.

Amen. I don't even know if we're ever going to get out of these first introductory statements because already just in this introduction and in this greeting, Paul has set forth the gospel. Having mentioned resurrection and now the crucifixion, gave himself for our sins to set us free from this present evil age.

Here's a real glimpse into the apostolic mindset. Our thought that the gospel and the atonement has set us free from sin. We can find an eternal place in heaven.

But the early church saw what God has done more in the context of the conflict between the powers of the air that rage for the souls of men and vie for dominion over God's own creation. So to be freed through the gospel is to be freed from the clutches of that kingdom of darkness that pervades all the world and set us free from this present evil age. Now if you're really a Bible student and you ought to be, it means that you don't over every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

So when Paul uses a phrase like the present evil age, he's making a statement of uttermost significance. What's the significance of the word present? Why does he have to say present evil age? Isn't that unnecessary? Isn't it redundant? Isn't it obvious that the evil age is this? When he uses the word present, it already implies that it's transient. That it will one day pass.

That the apocalyptic act has already taken place that has set in motion through the crucifixion of Jesus those trained events that will bring in a kingdom opposite to the darkness of this present age. Present implies transient, temporary passing. There's another age and it will be enduring rather than transient and it will be glorious rather than, and righteous rather than evil.

So you see, all that's implied in Paul is something like squeeze him, wring him out a bit, and something exudes from out of his apostolicity. This is not some self-conscious minister who's wearing a label. He is the thing in himself.

And here we can see it, that even in the artless and unpremeditated introduction and, what do you call it, dedication to the readers, grace be unto you, is an entire statement of a remarkable kind. And this is a picture of what God is wanting for the church. The apostle and the prophet is the foundation of the church.

God is wanting a church like that, that is not self-conscious, that is not ministerial minded, that even in its ordinariness, in its everyday greetings and salutation, that's the word I'm looking for, something is expressed that cannot help but be expressed because we are the thing in ourselves as Paul was the thing in himself. We are the reality. And we see it in a certain way and we express it in a certain way.

Would you have ever used that phrase now currently to describe Scotland or the UK or the world as this present evil age? Is it really evil for you? Or is it really not bad in some of its aspects if not in most of its aspects? Are you as detached and as in opposition to this present world and this age as Paul? Do you see it as sinister and evil? All the more because its evil is clouded, is veiled, and purports to be good, and benevolent, and that makes it yet the more evil because what it is parading and what it's presenting to men is an alternative to God. And therefore, because of its seductive, seeming benefit and benevolence, it is all the more evil. Paul saw right through this present evil age.

And you can tell just from that phrase he's looking forward to that which will succeed it and that what he's doing in his labors, day in and day out, and in this letter to the Galatians to help them not to lose the purity of the gospel is toward that end. See, this is a picture of what an apostle is, and we need all the more to immerse ourselves into it because we know that one of the profound signs of the last days are men purporting to be apostles and are not. False apostles, false prophets, false teachers, false, false, false, false.

So we need to be reminded and restored to what is original, given by God. Paul, an apostle, by God and not by man. Not some phony produced in some institution that uses apostolic vocabulary because it brings a certain air, but the real thing in himself, the foundation of which the church itself should be established in keeping with that same character and kind.

Why is that the foundation? Because we who are the superstructure, it ought equally to reflect that foundation and be like it. Whether we are called individually to be apostles or prophets, we are all called to the church as a prophetic and apostolic entity, a reality that is in opposition to this present evil age and betokens and signifies and is the statement in itself of that which is to come. Got the picture? Praise the Lord.

I'm impressed with what I'm saying. Not ever having said anything quite like this before, but even in the way that I'm speaking and sharing, I'm replicating or showing forth that I am the thing in myself. This is unrehearsed.

I'm speaking of something that was quickened while you were asleep this morning. And in making these observations, I can see the operation of the life of God as we can see it in Paul and as the world needs to see it in us. And the thing that most prohibits, intimidates, threatens, and puts aside this reality is our own self-conscious spirituality, our own self-conscious ministerial-mindedness, which is so much catching the flavor of this present evil age.

It's almost professional. Self-consciousness is still self even when it's a spiritual self-consciousness. So Paul is an artless, what shall I say, as I think I am, and I'm exhibiting, just expressing what we are by the grace of God and being freed from that kind of self-consciousness that imprisons us, that is stultifying, and sends off and gives off a false and artificial note rather than the real and the authentic thing.

So, praise the Lord for chapter 1, verse 1. It's a book in itself if we read it rightly. And verse 4, Who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world as we have read, according to the will of God our Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Now, what shall we say about that? You want to know what an apostle is, or a prophet, the foundations of the Church, when you scratch them deeply? What is their essential motive for being? What is it that is their incentive that drives them and that will, in the last analysis, invoke their death? Not of old age, but of violence. It's because of what is expressed in this one verse that is lost from the consciousness of the Church today, namely, the glory of God forever and ever. See, we don't even think in terms of forever and ever.

It sounds to us like a rhetorical flourish, like a kind of stylistic appendage that somehow flows along with Scripture. Uh-uh. This is one of the deepest and incisive reflections of what is the motivating power of the apostle and the prophet, the jealousy for the glory of God, and not just as a final moment, but in all moments, because forever and ever is not only future, it's present.

Like, for example, right now, today, in this circle. Is this to the glory of God forever? Because if it is, then it's more than just a class. And it's that sense of the something more that distinguishes the Church from everything around it that is in the world.

We have an enhanced view of reality that takes the ordinary, the mundane, and imbues it with a certain kind of respect and appreciation as having to do with the glory of God, and not just instruction. That our

every moment is charged with the prospect of pertaining to the glory of God. And if it's to the glory of God now, then it's to the glory of God forever, because in the realm that God occupies, there is no past, present, and future.

He's in the eternal now always, and so ought we also to be. We need to become, in a word, forever-minded. Eternally-minded.

Not as something that we will inherit when we die, but as the very mode of our present being. And to see everything that the ordinary moment is set in the context of eternity, imbues that moment with a significance and a charging of it that transforms it. So that for the true Church, there's nothing ordinary.

There's nothing commonplace. There's nothing everyday. Every moment, class, conversation, sitting at the table together, is the prospect for the glory of God forever.

We mustn't dismiss this as some kind of rhetorical flourish, as a stylistic thing that Paul and other of the biblical writers employ. It's the deepest statement of their reality. They were men always living in the eternal moment, always viewing something, not in terms of whether it will succeed or whether it brings us a blessing or whether we will enjoy it.

Those are secondary considerations, if they are considerations at all. There's only one consideration that's apostolic, and that is the glory of God. And if it glorifies him, we'll be blessed also.

But if we don't make that our vantage point, if we don't make that the focus of our being, then we're going to find ourselves acting out our lives at a lesser level. Did they like it? Did they enjoy it? Were they blessed? See what I mean? This glory of God is a merciful provision to lift us up and out to a higher plane of being and consideration. And once you're on that plane, and it's the issue of God's glory, then you have to say, well, who can perform this? If it's a moment so charged with that kind of significance, if it's more than instruction, if this is an eternal moment that's not going to be given again and has to do with the glory of God, who knows what the consequence of this morning will be and the outworking of your lives and what will go forth on the tape to who knows where.

Then who's able to perform this? Who then can be a teacher in a situation like that? Who then can be a student in a situation like that? So right away, then, another factor is brought in, the thing, the factor of which Paul frequently states is who is sufficient for these things. If we're just playing at church and we're doing something good in the want of some other alternative, that's okay. But if we're in the realm pertaining to God's glory, then who's sufficient for these things? Then right away, the issue of the life of God, the resurrection, the reality that sustains the church and the resurrection is its life, becomes paramount and important.

I'm almost always weak. I'm almost always tired. And that the reason is, as Paul said, that the power of God, that you should not be won to his message by his eloquence, but by the power of God, that your faith should rest in the power of God and not his impressive natural attributes.

And so also for myself, it's a kind of a humiliation to feel tired, weak, not to have your act together, not to be clear, and just to trust and let the Lord by his life bring forth, which I believe he's doing from the first word this morning. And I trust that he will all through the day and tonight because we're called to something more than a class. We're called to the glory of God forever, and only his life is sufficient for that requirement.

For us, then, the issue of resurrection is more than a correct doctrine. For us, it's the very source of our being because who's sufficient for these things? So he marveled that you are so often removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, it would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we are or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men or God? And do I seek to please men? For if I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ. Oh, I hope you enjoy the flavor of this and what Paul is saying in verse 10.

Am I now seeking human approval? I've got two Bibles balanced here. I'm reading the King James, and then on certain places, I like the phrasing of this other because it has more of a contemporary ring. Am I now seeking human approval? If you were, Paul, you would be invalidated as an apostle.

An apostle does not give a rap for human approval. There's only one thing that concerns him, that he be found acceptable unto God. And that will take a tremendous freeing power to those of us who have been shaped in the world and are tuned to the approval of men and need it.

And therefore, consciously or unconsciously, there's always a leaven in the lump. There's always something of a compromising kind that prevents us from wielding the sword. It says in Jeremiah 46, Cursed is that man who does the work of God deceitfully and whose sword does not bring blood.

That is to say, you spare your hearers by taking the sting out or making it nice that it might be acceptable because you're too much concerned with how they are hearing you and how they are receiving you. You desperately and urgently need their approval. And it may well be, tying up with last night's message, the reason that the church has avoided the Jews is because there's something in the Gentile church that wants Jewish approval.

I have seen this again and again. I don't know what it is, but Gentiles tremble for Jewish approval. Maybe because it's something of the place in the world that Jews occupy that to have their approval is an ego-gratifying thing.

But if we're going to be ministers to them in an apostolic and prophetic way or to anyone in the world, we must be absolutely impervious to the issue of whether or not we please men. So this is a portrait of apostolicity, which the church desperately needs. Am I now seeking human approval? See, seeking shows an intent to obtain approval.

It's more than just some unconscious kind of a thing. It's very conscious. Paul's not seeking it.

He's seeking God's approval. Am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ, and I would go so far as to say you could not be a servant of Christ. If the pleasing of man is a component, conscious or unconscious, in your need for ego gratification, acceptance, fear of rejection, you cannot be a servant of Christ.

You're invalidated. You can bring some modicum of blessing. You might make someone happy.

You might do something good. But a servant of Christ requires this absolute severance from anything that you need as a motivation that seeks approval from men. Ipso facto, you are ruled out as God's servant if

you're a man-seeker and a man-pleaser.

For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that this gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin. For I did not receive it from a human source. I'm reading verses 11 and 12.

Nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Well, where does that put us? We're students. We're out of school.

We're being taught. How imperative is it for us that the gospel that we preach and that we proclaim is not given to us by man but by God? And what then is the value or even the validity of a school? How jealous are we not to become brainwashed and, what's the word, fitted in, orchestrated? Huh? Conformed. Conformed to a certain expectation and that we'll get a certificate when we finish that we have completed the course.

How much do we need to guard our spirits to know that however instructive something is, that the genius of the gospel, the heart of the message of God, cannot be taught by man and must somehow be obtained in some direct communion with God himself, which is a much more difficult thing to obtain than that which you would obtain by being in a classroom. There's a value for what is given in a classroom, but the ultimate knowledge of the message that we're called to bear, the gospel, the genius of it, what it is as the statement of God, cannot be taught. It has got somehow to be imparted.

It has got to be revelatory. So here, Paul's experience is a paradigm, a standard, a pattern for all of us. But are we as jealous to avoid being indoctrinated and learning how to say the right thing that prevents the revelation of God? If the Lord sees that you're content with the measure of something and have the outline of it which you have received from men, and you're not jealous to have the authentic thing in itself that can only be forgotten from God, he'll let you have what you have desired.

So what will you do? You'll parrot. You'll say the right things. You'll know the right phrases.

I don't know about you. I am struck again and again with the artificiality of the language of Christians. I'm not persuaded, I'm not convinced that they know what they're talking about and that they have really appropriated the reality of which they speak.

Even when they talk about the blood of Christ or atonement or the cross, they're saying the right thing, they're saying the correct thing, but they're not saying it correctly. They're saying it by virtue of having been inducted in a program of right vocabulary and have allowed that to stand for the reality, but it's not real for them. And we can go along a lifetime in that unreality, saying and performing and blessing and pleasing others because they are also in the same place and we're sharing the same kind of language and mentality and we are everyone out of apostolic reality and are not impressing the world, let alone moving Jews to jealousy.

When the Scripture says, Contend for the faith once and for all, given the saints, it's not talking about learning its doctrines. It's contending for the faith, for the authentic reality that has got to come to us from God. Are we jealously seeking that or are we in fact in a school because we want a shortcut and we want to be saved the labor and the intensity of having to seek God for what we can gain much more easily secondhand by men.

Check your motives. Put first things first. Don't be satisfied with some warmed-over hash because even though it's the correct language, if it's not truth for you, it has become false and it will impress no one.

You remember what the widow woman said to Elijah when he raised her son from the deathbed? When he stretched himself out over that cold cadaver? Eyeball to eyeball, fingertip to fingertip, and cried out to God? He wasn't performing some kind of magical deliverance in an antiseptic distance. He immersed himself in the death of that son. And when he stretched himself out over that prostrate body, what he was really saying when he gasped and cried, I'm willing for the life to go out from me, that it would go into him, and I'm willing to be identified with his death.

This is more than some little Patsy formula. In the name of Jesus... It was an identification of the deepest kind with the death of that cadaver that God honored and brought life. It was a real cry from Elijah.

It was not just a mechanical request. He cried out three times. And there are souls in this circle, maybe all of us, and certainly throughout all Christendom, who will go an entire Christian life without crying out once.

We don't know what it means to cry out. Crying out is out of the existential depths. It's out of the gut.

And we're living superficially, out of the top of our heads, out of our external personality. And therefore, we don't have a message. That's compelling, because we are not the message.

So watch out what you receive from men, and be insistent and jealous for what can only come from God. That this gospel that was preached by me is not of human origin. I didn't receive it as a formula on how to get saved.

And that, in fact, as I was trying to say last night, is exactly what has happened to our present faith. It has become a formula. Much better if we would choke and splutter and not be able to express the grandeur of what the gospel is, than that we should reduce it to a formula that we could glibly express.

Because we have learned it cheaply, we express it cheaply. Got the picture? We've got to be willing to contend for the faith and not allow something to come into our vocabulary that has not a corresponding reality. The gospel, in fact, is reality.

The gospel is God's salvation from unreality. And the whole world is unreal. It's living a fake thing.

It's a mirage. It doesn't take eternity into consideration. Its values are cheap.

It's glib. It's personality-centered. It's sexy.

It's blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It's a lie. It's an unreality into which the whole of mankind has been inducted.

What is our mission? To save them from the death of that. And to show them that if they continue, they'll be an eternal consequence of a most painful kind. So contend for the faith, for the reality of God.

Make it your own. That it's not of human origin, nor did I receive it from a human source. I didn't receive it from men, nor was I taught it.

But I received it through the revelation of Jesus Christ. That could mean that a revelation given by Jesus Christ or a revelation of Jesus Christ. And you'll forgive me, but as a Jewish believer, I sometimes stagger even at the phrase, Jesus Christ.

Because it has become itself a little patsy formula, a little intonation, little Jesus Christ, this, Jesus Christ, that, as if to invoke that label, sanctifies what we are about. It really should be Jesus the Christ, Yeshua ha-the in Hebrew, Mashiach. Yeshua ha-Mashiach, Jesus the Christ.

But when you leave out the article the, Jews and others think that Christ is Jesus' last name. That's what I thought as a Jewish kid growing up. I don't know of any Jew who's called Christ.

I know Cohen and Greenberg, but I don't know a Jew by the name of Christ. How can that be our Messiah? It's because Greek does not have the article the. And when they translated the Greek into English, they left out the, until finally it became Jesus Christ, instead of Jesus the Christ, the Messiah.

And so if we have allowed his name to become a formula, what shall we say of the whole faith? I received it through a revelation. So to receive requires something to be given. And a revelation cannot be commanded.

Only God can give it and give it at his will. But to whom is the revelation of God given? Paul says in Romans 11, I would not have you to be ignorant of this mystery, lest you become wise in your own conceit. What mystery is he talking about? The mystery of Israel and the church, which is at the heart of the church's whole reason for being.

He said, I would not have you to be ignorant. Well, how shall we be saved? Because a mystery can never be taught. A mystery has to be communicated as revelation.

Our faith is revelatory. It's a revealed faith, which puts the premium on God, because revelation can only be given by God. And all we can do is have our hat in our hands in hope that we might receive it.

It humbles man and it exalts God. Do you like that? Well, you're a strange fish if you do. To allow God the premium to be with God, what if he doesn't act up? What if he doesn't perform? What if he doesn't give? Then you're left with your face sticking out.

And what are you going to communicate to men? And what do you know if it has not been given? And are you willing to wait? Or are you impatient to have it now? After all, you're going to graduate by a certain time, and you hope then also to be ministering. You see what is the pattern that is being put before us by Paul's own example? Can you imagine what the church would be today if Paul was too impatient to wait for revelation? If he went ahead being clever as he was and learned from other men what the message is and was able in his own human ability to perform it? We would not be the church today. We are the church, as poor as we are, only because Paul insisted on what could only be received from God when it is given.

We need to see ourselves as impatient and humanly trying to appropriate something before the time. I can remember, because my faith, I'm 36 years in the faith, when the body of Christ was a novel and new phraseology. Oh, I don't know when that came out, 1970s? And everybody was talking about the body of Christ, the body of Christ, the body of Christ, like it was some novelty that they were excited about because the church needs something.

And maybe this is what we need, and this is the key that's been missing. And everybody's, the body of Christ, and blah, blah, blah. There was only one guy who didn't say boo.

It was me. Art Katz, the dum-dum, knew nothing about the body of Christ, nor was I going to imitate from men what I could easily have learned from them, so I also could have joined the body of Christ club. My face was stuck out as not knowing, but waiting.

And how did God bring the revelation of the body of Christ? Through my Gentile wife, living with a Hebrew of the Hebrews whose lifestyle, mentality, taste, and values are completely opposite to mine in every, not some, in every point and particular. And it was abrasive, and it was the cross, and it was a suffering because I'm a man of the tent and the altar, and my wife is a woman of bric-a-brac, and decoration, and walls, and this, and pictures, blah, blah, blah. Clutter.

And I had to suffer it because our marriage was more than the issue of accommodation. Our marriage was itself a mystery of Jew and Gentile being made into one new man. I learned the body of Christ through my marriage, through the suffering of it, through the anguish, through the frustration of the differences that had to be reconciled that we might be made one, and that's what the body is.

Now, are you willing to wait? Are you willing to suffer that you might have not just a mechanical formula, but an exquisite grasp, an appreciation of something that has been imparted in a revelatory way through the grit and circumstance of your life, not when you desired it, but when he chooses to give it? Because if you are impatient and urgent and want it now for your ministry, you'll just be another cheap huckster for which they are a dime a dozen today and make sound and fury that signifies nothing. Give me one art cats to a thousand of these hotshots who will dissipate with the air, but what issues from this one man who has waited on God for the revelation that has to be given will have a lasting and enduring consequence of which you yourself are the beneficiaries this morning. Got the picture? Our whole age is impatient.

This is the now generation. Instant, there's air-boiling water. Pop and fizzle.

You can have it now. We don't know what it is to wait. We're too impatient to wait.

We want to be gratified now because our motive is not the glory of God, but our satisfaction, even in religious and spiritual things. Dum-da-dum-dum, and therefore we are not apostolic. We're just a cheapy religious counterpart to the world.

We're playing their game. We're subscribing to their wisdom and the powers of darkness that look on us and see right through us yawn right in our face, and here we are taking cities by praise and worship. And they go, yeah.

Fancy that. I'm not impressed at all. You cause no apprehension in me.

You're not even to be considered. You're just about some kind of culture. It's a religious thing that counts for nothing because it reflects my spirit in the world and my mentality that you have imbibed and brought into your Christian endeavor.

Oh, you dear saints, you need to understand the cosmic parameters of the faith, which is the conflict and the contest between the principalities and the powers of the air, the wisdom of this present evil age and the wisdom of God, who has perfected praise through the mouths of babes and sucklings so to shut the mouth of his adversary. That's why God works through weakness, because the powers of darkness work through strength, macho, prestige, power, authority, wealth, finance. God works through foolish, weak, pathetic, inept, things of whom the world is not worthy.

He perfects his praise and his wisdom through babes and sucklings. Why? So that he can thumb his nose to the powers of the air whose wisdom is contrary to God's, whose value system emphasizes power, assertion, impatience, lust, ambition, fame. God chooses caves, he chooses stables, he chooses Israel, he chooses art cats, he chooses you, the weak, nondescript, nothings, the beggars whom he takes off the dung heaps to make to sit with princes, so to stop the mouth of his adversary, because he's going to triumph on the basis of that which is weak, that which is lowly, that which is of no account.

God, and that's what he demonstrated in his own earthly tenure, born in a stable, and crucified in the dung heap outside the city. That's the kingdom, that's the king. You remember what he said to Peter when Peter said, Lord, let this be far from you, get thee behind me, you stink, you savor of that which is of man, and not of God.

John chapter 3, end of chapter 2, Many believed upon him for the miracles which he performed, but he would not commit himself unto them, for he knew what was in man, and would not give himself to man. Do you despise what is in man? What is of man is of Satan. Get thee behind me, Satan.

You stink from what is of man, human opinion, human values, that have its origin from below and not from above. You need to keep man at arm's length, not just other men, but your own man, your own humanity, and your own confidence and trust in it. You need to despise it, make it suspect, and therefore, only that which comes from above.

You want revelation from God about the faith, about the gospel, about the Lord, and you're willing to wait for it. And if it doesn't come on time, or at all, you would much rather be a dumb-dumb and looked upon with contempt by other Christians because they would expect you should know something. Haven't you been to school? Then you should take a shortcut merely to placate and please man.

Oh, you dear souls. Because if we do, what is our message? How are we in opposition to this present evil age? We're reflecting it. It's impatience, it's man-centeredness, even in the name of Christ.

We represent something other, another kingdom, another way, another mindset, another mentality, another wisdom in everything. It waits to be given. It trusts Him to give.

It will not be satisfied or seek a cheaper and easier alternative. Why does the church not know the mystery of which Paul warned, that if we did not know this mystery, we would grow wise in our own conceit, the mystery of Israel in a church? Why hasn't God given us the revelation of that mystery? Because we have not sought it? Because we have been satisfied with our own explanations? Because we are anti-Jewish and don't want to know of a mystery that in the end is going to exalt that nation? He sees our hearts, and He's not going to bestow the gem and the jewel of His revelation. It's like casting pearls before swine.

He waits to see a receptive heart that would be grateful for the revelation of the mystery. And I can tell you that though I'm Jewish, and though I have a distinguished calling in God, this was not always my understanding. I myself did not understand the mystery of Israel.

I even opposed any talk about Israel having a destiny. I was only concerned for the church and its glory. I would go to Israel every year to minister, but only as if I would go to any other country for the body of Christ.

I did not understand that Israel had a distinctive purpose until God revealed it. And when did He reveal it? In a season of death, when He had dissolved our community, when He brought everything down, when my

wife threatened divorce and suicide, when I couldn't find employment, I was too old, and I had university degrees, and I couldn't get a job as a dishwasher. In a season of humiliation and death and expulsion, the Lord began to open the revelation of the mystery of Israel when He had me enrolled in a liberal Lutheran seminary when I was already in my 60s and twice the age of my teachers.

And there, not because of the teachers, not because of the seminary, but while I was at it and in the library looking for books with an assignment, my eye would fall on something else. And the Lord used that time and season of death to bring forth a revelation that is now our prime purpose for being and communicated to the Church worldwide. I had to wait.

And that it came in a season of death is not at all an accident because waiting is dying. Have you tried it lately? Waiting is dying. And we have very little penchant for suffering.

Waiting is a suffering. And this is at the heart of priestliness, is to wait. When you read the consecration of priests in the book of Leviticus, of all they had to do when they were ordained as priests, having been derived from the genealogy of Aaron, and they had to be washed with water and the clothing that they had to put on and blood sprinkled all over, and my, what an elaborate preparation for the holy task of priesthood, the last thing was they would await by the door of the tent of meeting seven days.

The last requirement before their priesthood could be ordained was a seven-day period of waiting. What's the significance of it? Seven is the number of completion. If there's any impatience, hey, when do we get with it? Boy, I want to get into this.

I'm going to cut quite a figure as a priest. I've been waiting for this now for 20 years, and da-da-da-da-da, disqualified. If there was any itch, any human itch, to be seen, to be heard, to be recognized to do, disqualified.

That itch had to die out in a season of final waiting at the very door of the tent of the meeting. This is lost to us saints. This is archaic, this is archaeological.

It's not part of our contemporary mindset, but needs to be if we are going to communicate the gospel as holy in a priestly way, and the knowledge that is only given by revelation through waiting. Your impatience, your itch to be seen, to be heard, and to do will disqualify you. Paul waited.

He would not receive what he could easily have gained through man. This gospel that I preach is not of human origin, nor did I receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it as a formula, but I received it. See, isn't that humble, humbling? Receive when? When it's given.

In the Lord's time, through revelation of and of Jesus Christ, and by Jesus Christ. Then he goes on, You've no doubt heard of my early life in Judaism. Here's the contrast.

I was violent, persecuting the church of God, trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age. I was far more zealous for the traditions, etc., etc.

What a contrast. Here's the man of impatience. And what's the end of his religious impatience? Murder.

What's the end of his zeal? Murder and persecution of Christ himself, Israel's own Messiah. You want to see what the ultimate logic is of being wound up and doing your own thing by your own zeal in the name of God? It's to persecute and to murder the very God you're purporting to serve. What a before and after in

Saul and Paul.

They go from impatient zeal to a priestly waiting upon God for that which is given by Christ, of Christ, for Christ. That makes the apostle the apostle. Then we come to the wonderful verse, But when God... There's the when.

There's the but. But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me or to me so that I might proclaim or preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being. I did not confer with man.

Nor did I go up to Jerusalem, to the religious capital of the charismatic world, to those who were already apostles before me. But I went away at once into Arabia, the desert. I went where there's nothing, stripped, dry, barren location.

I didn't want to have any influence from anything that would color or affect my understanding, not only from man, but even from nature. I went to a place that was absolutely barren, me and God, and to wait there for three years in what God would give me by revelation. You see what goes into the making of an apostle? How much are you willing should go into you in the making of you? How much has gone into me in 36 years? For how long a time was I so unseen and unknown and unheralded when the Lord brought us to northern Minnesota, which was our Arabia, that people thought I was dead? What happened to this odd cast, that scintillating Jewish personality that we thought would be the Jewish Billy Graham and was a real charismatic darling on Kathryn Kuhlman's television program and full gospel circles? The guy has dropped completely out of sight.

We haven't seen or heard from him for years. Has he died? In a certain sense, yeah. God sent him to Arabia, there to wait, there to be dealt with in a stripping environment because an apostle and a prophet is not made in a day.

There's a remarkable investment of God over a period of time through seasons of trial and suffering. I mentioned last night Oswald Chambers. How many people here read him? Only one? Oswald Chambers, my utmost, or his highest? Oh, class is dismissed.

I'm wasting my time. You've got to read him daily. The man's exquisite.

The depth of his understanding of the subtleties of flesh and soul and the issues of faith and ministry is superb. In fact, a lot of what I'm sharing today started by my reading of Oswald Chambers this morning because his text was Galatians chapter 1. That's how I got into the whole subject, through Oswald. My utmost for his highest.

It's a daily devotional reading. The man died when he was 36, 37, 38, but his wife took painstaking notes of all of his statements when he was the president of a Bible college, when he was the chaplain in Egypt during World War I, and generations of saints have been blessed out of their socks by the depth and the apprehension of the reality of this faith, as I don't know anyone that has matched him. I cannot live without my reading in this day, every day of Oswald Chambers, my first devotional reading.

I have three other sources, but he's my first. And it's remarkable how often his statement, like today, triggers something or corresponds to something else that the Lord is quickening and gives you something fresh from the throne of heaven. But here's my point.

I said last night Oswald Chambers went through a dark night of the soul. Read his biography. The man agonized for the longest period of time.

At the very same time when people were complimenting him for his religious and spiritual accomplishment, he himself knew that though he was making an impressive outward performance, he did not have the corresponding reality within. And he would not have it until God had dealt with him in a long dry season of the soul, his Arabia, that when he came out of that he knew what he knew what he knew. How many of us are willing for suffering like that? Waiting is more than twiddling your thumbs.

Waiting is Arabia. Waiting is dry places. Waiting is barrenness.

And there's every temptation to avoid it. Cheap fizz, cheap soda, cheap this, cheap drink, instant this, instant that. And we want to do the same thing with the faith.

And we have not recognized what a jewel this is. This is not a cheapie. This is a life-giving message that alone has the power to break people out of the unreality which is death in the world, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, to those who can convey to them the alternative reality which is of God, the Gospel, and is more than a formula but can only be obtained when it is given.

This is the man who had violently persecuted the church in Assyria. But when God... Are you mocking this? I had an interpreter in Czechoslovakia where John and I are going soon in a few days. When he came up to the platform to be my interpreter, he came up with one of these little mini-Bibles with fine print.

I thought, uh-oh. And when he opened it, there was not a mark in the book. I thought, this guy is going to be a dud.

And he was. How can you have a Bible and not mark it? How can you not put an exclamation point, a bracket, a yellow marking, an underlining, an asterisk to bring your eye to attend to some key word, some key phrase, but when God... Have you got that? I got that marked. When God speaks volumes, it's the God who is sovereign.

It's the God who is God. And we cannot command or compel him for our convenience. Hey, get with it, Lord.

I'm getting old now. I'm 35, 40. Shouldn't I be doing something? People are paying the bill.

Shouldn't we be doing something that we can print in the newsletter that we're doing it? Come on, get with it. But when God... See what a faith this is? You dear saints, are you awake? Are you up? Are you following me? When God... It's the God who is God above us and our desires and our intentions and our thoughts. He's altogether other.

We cannot compel or cajole him for our convenience. He's the Lord and it's when he chooses because he's God. But when God... What a respect for the sovereignty of God.

What a respect for the holiness of God. What a respect for God as God that Paul had. And that's why he's an apostle.

That's what an apostle is. That's what an apostolic church is because God has been trivialized in our generation, not so much by the world but by the church. And you guys are in danger of promoting and continuing that trivialization because you won't wait.

Because you don't know God as Paul did. Because you think he's your handyman and your errand boy. And that's why you were saved.

Because if you believe and call on his name and make a decision, your marriage will be better. He'll find your boyfriend, girlfriend, your health, your body, your job. We have such a corrupt, degenerate view of God as somehow a supplement for us.

Well, who the hell is God? Us? Or him? Let's settle the issue. Or we have no message. And we're only adding to the confusion and death that is already in the world by bringing an appropriate religious counterpart.

We've got to know who this God is. When? God. But? When? God.

If we don't know God, who is free in himself to do what he will, when he will, what is our message? What are we communicating? What is our saving message to a dying world that will not respect and revere the God who is God? Because no matter what we say, they know what we are. We're communicating something with our talk, with our language, what our persons are. And if we know God as Paul, whether we speak of him explicitly or not, we're communicating that sense.

I'm doing that right now. I'm speaking out of a certain knowledge. Though he's not my subject, whatever the subject is, the reality that we have of God is communicated.

And if we do not know God as God, as sovereign, awesome, king, enthroned, the lord of glory, the creator and redeemer, who cannot be commanded by men, but is always on time. Hey, I shouldn't even be here this morning. I should be on my way to Florida to bury my mother.

Because that was the conventional expectation of men. But why am I here? Because, but God. Because there's something more important than conventional wisdom and placating the expectations of men.

It's pleasing to God, who is God, who will often require us the exact contradiction of what the world expects. You know what they'll say? You're loveless. You couldn't be at your own mother's funeral? What kind of respect is that? What kind of a son are you? What, are you cheap? You couldn't afford the airfare? Too lazy? No, I had a divine appointment someplace in Scotland that I didn't know would be as significant as it's proving to be, but I dare not miss it or miss him.

But God. Do you have that but in your life? This is the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, not what they know about church building and government and how to resolve differences. The foundation of the apostles and the prophets is the knowledge of God as God, and not as we think him to be.

Our handyman. Our errand boy. But God, when? When he chooses.

But when God, who had set me apart before I was born, listen to this Paul, called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his son to me, and in another, in the same Greek word, his son in me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles. Listen to this language. There was no proclaiming, no preaching, no setting forth until the when came.

Paul could go blue in the face, he could stomp his foot, he can pout, he can cry, he can say the Jews are dying, the world is dying. There's no going, no proclaiming until the when of God, that I might proclaim. The might is the enablement and the ability to release when comes.

We can't coerce God, but don't think that God has not his purposes in his time, and that he is not heart-stricken for the condition of mankind and wants to see them delivered out of death by those whom he will send, who know him and can make him known. He'll be on time, you can be assured of it. I've never been so busy in all my life, and I'm not looking for anything, but it just continues to happen.

Books and translations in Dutch and Lithuanian and my book is coming out in Chinese! My first book, *The Journal of an Atheistic Jew* that I kept 36 years ago hitchhiking through Europe and the Middle East looking for philosophical answers as a disillusioned ex-Marxist. It's a perfectly appropriate book for Chinese ex-Marxists. But how do you get that into China? How do you get that translated? The Lord? When? But when, God? So I want you to benefit, dear saints, from my history.

And that's why he has given you older, gray-haired men who have a history in God to encourage you because you're younger, because you're impatient, because you want to be approved and you want to show that the investment in sending you to school was worthwhile and now look what you're doing. Trust him. He's on time.

He's more anxious than you for a dying world. And yet he's a master builder. I ask, maybe I want to go to the distillery today, not because I'm a whiskey drinker, but I want to see the process by which a rare vintage is produced like wine.

The world knows how to do it and will not rush the process or you'll have a cheap substitute that is only a fizz. They let their things rest in casks and oak casks that are expensive in dark places in the Arabia in which Paul himself went till finally something can be drawn off that would be exquisite. And if men will do that with wine and with booze, what will God do with his saints? Is he going to make us a fizz for the world when they need to lift a glass that has a color and a vintage and a bouquet and a scintillation that is life-giving? Trust him.

We prayed this morning that we would not be shaped in our own image, but his. When God, who had set me apart before I was born, look at the knowledge of the God's sovereignty, and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his son in me so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles. What shall we say? Call to proclaim him among the Jews.

To proclaim is to set forth not an abstract message, but him. That he might reveal his son in me that I might proclaim him. So, are we ready to take a break? I don't know what your schedule is.

Yeah, we can take a break now. So I want to ask you, take this question to the break time with you. Which hymn are you setting forth? Which hymn are you making known? Which hymn are you proclaiming or preaching? A romantic hymn? Can he sing it now? Sing it.

But I'm not saying H-Y-M. H-I-M. Which hymn are you setting forth? Who are you presenting when you speak and teach? Well, not yet, no.

I want you to dwell on that because the hymn that is having the wider circulation is not the true Jesus. It's a counterfeit. It's a Gentile-ized form.

It's a romantic version. I was just sharing with John's father, we both share a disgust for those paintings of Jesus and those illustrations of Jesus. It's commendable art and it's an impressive figure that they draw and paint, but who can know what the Lord was and is as to present him in a pictorial way? By necessity and by definition, it has got to fail.

However impressive it is, it's got to be less than what the Lord is in himself. What hymn are we presenting? It's the hymn in which we have been conditioned and exposed, but do we have an authentic hymn that is not some romantic projection but is the Lord himself? He says, I thank God that he was revealed in me and that revelation in me is what I make know. We've got to be jealous for the true hymn or we might find ourselves purveying something else, even in the name of Jesus, who is not a life-saving God but an easy-to-be-subscribed-to human construct.

Be jealous. Who is the hymn? I wrote here everywhere so falsely depicted, romanticized, humanized, idealized, gentitized. This is the son of David.

This is the Davidic son. The Hebrew of the Hebrews in the best sense. This is not some Judaized romantic thing.

This is the God's son in himself that has got to be formed in us, got to be revealed in us, got to be revealed through us. Whether or not we are explicitly preaching about him, whatever the subject is that God has given, even Galatians, he is ultimately the real subject. He is being set forth in whatever we say and do for God, whether or not he's the explicit subject or not.

We are preaching Christ. That is that measure or reality that we have. To whatever degree the real thing is what we are communicating.

So, which him are we proclaiming, setting forth? When was it obtained? When God, have we waited for that? Has our when come that you might proclaim him? So, Lord, we just stop at that point. I don't know what the capacity of this class is. We have perhaps already maybe gone beyond that capacity, and it's a losing investment.

So, my God, I ask that you would give us a refreshment for our souls, a capacity, my God, to hear the rich, detailed, insightful, and incisive things that you're putting before us, that is your once and for all, that has come through a prepared vessel who has waited for the when of God and is trying to instruct us in the most holy way and save us from the whole style and mood of this age which the church itself reflects unhappily. Come, my God, continue, give us the capacity to hear and to receive what you're wanting to give as revelation. Change us by it, we thank and give you the praise in Jesus' name.

Okay, my brother, sing your hymn. Yeah. Okay, take a break when you hear the whistle blow, come back.

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