

The Mysteries of the Faith

by Art Katz

The church's struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers of darkness, and it must understand the conflict with these powers to be effective in its mission.

Duration: 1:27:56

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 3:3-4, Ephesians 3:12, Ephesians 6:12, Hebrews 10:34, Hebrews 11:26, Hebrews 13:3

Topics: "Mystery"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the influence of spiritual forces in various aspects of society, such as institutions, culture, business, and entertainment. The speaker shares a personal experience of baptizing Lutherans who desired immersion instead of infant sprinkling. While walking to the locker room after the baptisms, the speaker slips and reflects on the importance of living in freedom and not being bound by fear or material possessions. The sermon emphasizes the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus, which is to demonstrate His wisdom through the church to the powers of the air. The speaker also highlights the example of a girl who endured confinement without complaining, attributing her suffering to the sovereignty of God rather than human responsibility.

Transcript

If this is important in your own sight, and you want, my God, the things that will be discussed to go out to a larger audience who are not presently with us, and have the same prospect for blessing and for understanding as to affect the Church where they are, we're asking, my God, that the blood of the Lamb, Jesus, would be not only upon our heads and upon this building and this room, but upon the equipment itself. That, in fact, we invite you, my God, to put up a cordon of angelic beings around us with their swords drawn to guard this place and to guard the sanctity of what you are about in this hour. And, Lord, instruct us that we're not playing make-believe, and we're not imagining or exaggerating some kind of threat from an invisible realm that we're overdoing.

If anything, we are underestimating the enormous significance of this demonic realm. So, Lord, instruct us, establish an understanding, my God, that makes the Church the Church, and help us with any difficulty through language, through vocabulary, through cultural differences, any kind of thing that would rob us of anything of the importance of what you want to communicate. We ask that grace.

Bless us together, Lord, that you might have such a blessed presence in this earth and in this nation of those who are girded and strengthened and know that there's a conflict on and are not afraid. And we bless you, Lord, and look to you now, thanking you for the blood upon us and over us, your brooding presence in your name, and the angelic host around us with swords drawn. In Jesus' name, amen.

Well, did you notice that in verse 12, there's one, two, three, four, five uses of the word against? For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places, against, against, against, against. We might well say that there's a war on, and it's been on for millennia, thousands of years. There's been a cosmic conflict between the powers of darkness and light, between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God.

And if we think that the subject of demons is only the issue of personal deliverance, we have missed the greater importance altogether. In fact, these dark powers would like for us to be totally caught up at the level of individual demon deliverance, as if that represents the whole issue. And I'm not invalidating deliverance for individuals.

I have been used of the Lord on occasions for that. But that seems to have fixed the understanding of the church at that level and robbed it of the greater understanding of the dimensions of the conflict between powers of darkness and light that are vying and are in contention for the actual dominion or possession of creation itself and the nations. Notice it says, we struggle.

This is not an issue for individuals. This is not something for just your great virtuoso saints or great men of faith and power that we like to look up at and think that we can never ourselves aspire to that kind of stature. Everything that we're talking about and everything that Paul is saying that we're reading is addressed to the church, the whole church.

We struggle. And until the church struggles, there's no victory. And it's a very special kind of struggle.

And we will go into that as we talk further on this subject. But unless we understand the struggle and understand the conflict, we cripple ourselves. We're acting in a way as if we are punching at the air and missing the greater issues that affect not only the church but the communities and the nation where we are.

Do you remember that when Daniel prayed, it took three weeks for him to receive an answer? And when the angel of the Lord came to Daniel, he explained, your prayer was heard from the moment that you opened your mouth. You have found favor with God, but the prince of Greece has contended against me and delayed my coming. So we're not talking about something imaginary, but something very real that though it is an invisible realm, has very practical consequence in the earth and with men.

It would be interesting to see just how effective the powers of the air can be if you would look in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, where Paul speaks in verse 7 about God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory, the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood. For if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Who is the they that crucified the Lord of glory? We think it's the Romans cooperating together with the Jewish religious leaders, but Paul does not mention either Romans or Jews.

The they does not refer to men. They refers to the rulers of this world's darkness. They crucified the Lord of glory.

They used human instruments, but they were the effectual power and motivation that affected the death of Christ. So here we have a remarkable glimpse of how far the powers of darkness can go in opposing God even to the crucifixion of the Son of God. But what is Paul saying? If they had known the wisdom of God, they would not have done it.

They acted out of their own wisdom, which always employs violence, always threat of violence, always intimidation, always death. Their wisdom is completely opposite to the wisdom of God. And as I'm going to show you in a few minutes, the whole conflict is a conflict between two wisdoms, two moral orders, a great cosmic conflict between light and darkness and the wisdom of this world and the rulers of this world and the wisdom of God.

Paul is saying that if the rulers of this world had known the wisdom of God, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Because in crucifying him, they set in motion the things that would in the end bring their defeat. That by his death, a resurrection would come and an ascension to the throne of God and the release of the Holy Spirit and the creation of the church enabled by that spirit to bring about the eventual defeat of the powers themselves.

If you want to understand the faith and the church, you must understand it in the context of the conflict with the powers of darkness or you do not understand it at all. So I want to repeat a quotation by a writer who says, the church that does not understand the principalities and the powers of the air condemns itself to futility. It can have all kinds of programs and evangelizations and things of that kind.

But if it has not recognized the presence over the community of this invisible realm of spirit reality and has not addressed that realm and broken its influence over the community where you seek to labor, you labor in vain. Now feel free to interrupt me at any time or raise a question or what do you mean by a word or a phrase that goes over your head and you don't grasp what I'm saying. My tendency is to make great statements and we need to stop and to examine them and understand what's being said.

We're not in any rush and I'm very much willing to repeat these statements that we can lay hold of them. So we, the church, struggle not against flesh and blood. We mustn't think that it's men who are opposing us.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against the rulers of this world's darkness. It's another kind of wrestling but only we can do it. So the whole issue of the great struggle in which the church is set requires the church to be the church.

If the church is only an institution where people come to attend services and sit in the kind of an audience of isolated individuals, it is not equipped for this struggle. This struggle requires the church to be the church in the sense that God intended it and not what we have made it. Unless the church is a we, it cannot engage in this struggle.

And that's why the powers of darkness will do everything to divide the church and divide individual members and bring up issues of irritation, resentment, jealousy, things based on race or discrimination or fear, to keep that church from becoming the corporate expression of the life of God that can wrestle. Are you following me? And that's why we ourselves need to understand that and give ourselves to seeing the

church come to this kind of reality. But it's contrary to our own flesh because it requires time, it means a loss of privacy, it means opening ourselves to things that might be embarrassing.

We ourselves prefer the church in its present configuration. We like to be anonymous, we like to see somebody else do it and we can say amen and hallelujah and sing the choruses, but not be required of. If we're going to be the church that brings glory to his name and defeat to the powers, we ourselves must struggle against our own flesh and against our own unwillingness.

You know what it said of Israel about the priests had themselves become backslidden and the people preferred to have it so. There's always a conjunction between the priests and the people. Israel actually preferred that its priests would not be priestly.

They liked it when they were not required of. And God's people today are very much in that kind of condition. So what we're attempting to communicate is an apostolic view of the church as God intended it from the beginning.

And you say what does apostolic mean? After three days perhaps we can begin to answer that. It's a certain view of reality. It's a certain mindset, a certain perception of things, particularly the things that are not seen and are invisible.

It's a view of the church set in a cosmic context that sees a struggle that has gone on since the beginning of time when there was a rebellion in heaven and one third of the angelic host followed their prince and rebelled against God. And that rebellion continues to this day. So what are the principalities and the powers of the heir? They are at a dimension of invisible angelic realm of angels that had been created by God to inhabit a realm over the earth and over nations called the heavenlies.

Remember Paul says that he speaks of himself as having gone up to the third heaven and to have seen things that are not lawful for a man to speak. See we don't talk like that. We don't know that there's a third heaven because our view has been so earthly.

But we need to understand these dimensions though they are invisible. When Paul speaks about the powers of darkness in heavenly places he's not talking about the heaven which God himself inhabits but a stratum in the air over the earth. Now any of us who have traveled in different countries know that the moment that you cross a border and go into another country you can sense something in the air.

Have you ever used that expression there's something in the air? You can feel something in the air and that's exactly what we're talking about. The principalities and powers of the air were originally intended by God as an aid to the government of his creation. They were given a governmental assignment to aid in the redemptive work of God for men in the earth that they might find God.

But in their rebellion they took their governmental positions and used it against God. And instead of directing men toward God and encouraging men toward God they do exactly the opposite and they have themselves become the gods of this present world. They not only are unsatisfied with merely influencing nations, races, and men but they want actually to obtain the worship of men.

And they are particularly active in institutions in culture, in business in commerce, in sport in amusement, TV recreation, entertainment. I'll tell you how I was introduced to this subject in the institution of medicine. It came about some years ago that I had finished baptizing about 12 Lutherans I had immersed them in water because they were not satisfied with infant sprinkling after the messages that the Lord had given me

and we went to a YMCA swimming pool and there I performed the baptisms.

And I was on my way to the locker where my clothing was hanging and all of a sudden my feet shot out from under me. I had slipped on the tile floor on a little puddle of water and I was doing a somersault in the air and while I was up in the air I'm thinking to myself cats, what are you doing there? You don't have accidents. That's true.

None of us do. And when I came down, I came down on my knee with an enormous explosive force. I had my Bible in my hand and virtually every page of that Bible was crumpled by the impact.

That's how hard I came down. And so I was going to be God's man of faith and power and not go to a doctor or a hospital and I preached that night with my leg my knee swollen like a football. And the next day it got even worse and the brothers insisted that I go to a hospital and see a doctor.

I agreed. And it was a Jewish doctor who was an orthopedic surgeon who was treating me and he showed me the x-ray. He said, now Mr. Katz, he said your knee is not fractured, it's smashed and it needs to be wired up in an operation.

I said, okay. When can you do it? Well, he said Thursday. It may have been Tuesday.

I said, no. I said, I've got to be in northern Minnesota. The Lord is giving us a property.

He said, who? And so I had an opportunity to speak to a Jewish physician about the Lord by a man whom he could recognize as speaking the same kind of language and yet taking God very seriously and that God is active in that man's life. This is a whole new dimension of understanding for a Jewish secular man. And as we were talking he had his hand on my knee and all of a sudden his eyes grew large and he said, something is happening in your knee.

The pieces are coming together. He said, I could feel it. He said, if I put your leg in a cast right now you'll not need an operation.

I said, okay, do it. So he put my leg in a cast and that night there I was with my leg up in suspension just overnight and here's what happened. The nurse came in with a hypodermic needle and she wanted to give me a shot for pain and I said, no thank you.

I don't need that. Oh, she said, but you must have it. I said, no, I'm not in agonizing pain.

I can bear this small inconvenience. Oh, she said, but you must have it. I said, no, I don't want to be drugged up and I don't want my consciousness affected by drugs.

I hope that you are as jealous to keep your own mind and spirit. And she walked out of the room in a great huff like I had really insulted her and she came back with pills. I said, lady, you don't understand.

I'm not afraid of a needle. I've been in the American army. I've had my both arms punctured at the same time.

It's nothing, but I don't want to be sedated. I don't want to be drugged that I should not feel this small pain. And the next thing I knew, there were two nurses and two doctors in the doorway of my room and they were having a fit.

I mean, they were foaming at the mouth in my refusal to receive a sedation against pain. And I realized that without thinking I had touched a sacred principle of the medical profession. More than that, I had touched the wisdom of this world, which is the avoidance of pain and the pursuit of pleasure.

And that was my introduction to realizing that there is a massive conflict going on between darkness and light and two kinds of wisdom. The wisdom of this present world by which almost all of mankind lives its life, which brings them into bondage, fear, intimidation, and threat. It makes them slaves to the powers of this air, of the air, because it plays upon insecurity, ambition, lust.

This is the wisdom of this world. Now, if the church itself lives by that wisdom, it has no effectual opposition to those powers. And that's why they can look down and say, Jesus we know and Paul we know, but who are you? They are not impressed with our worship service.

They're not impressed with our programs. They look to see one thing only. They are required to recognize one thing only.

Apostolic authenticity. Now write that in your notes. Apostolic authenticity.

That is to say, they need to see the reality of heaven and the wisdom of God as being the effectual foundation of the life of God's people. If you are insecure, if you're worried what's going to happen if you lose your job, or you're working for the government, or there's a change in government, or there's a layoff, or anything like that, and do not recognize who your true employer is, then you are ineffectual before the powers of the air. Faith is more than subscribing to correct doctrine.

The just shall live by their faith. And of what shall we be afraid? Fear is the chief weapon of the powers of darkness. Fear of insecurity.

Fear of loss of esteem or reputation. Fear of being hurt. Fear of suffering.

Why do you think it is that when God's people are imprisoned in iron curtain countries and in places that are hostile to the gospel, that they take such a delight not just in imprisoning them, but torturing them? They want to break the Christian and have the Christian to act like any man in the world would in preserving his own flesh. And if they can break the Christian, there's a delight and a glee that says to them that your faith is just a mirage. It's just a verbal kind of thing.

You're no different than anyone in the world. There was a Russian girl before the communist system collapsed, which we may yet see again, who was imprisoned for five years and she had not committed any crime. It was a trumped-up charge.

And she was sent to Siberia, one of the remote places, because she was affecting many lives by her witness and they wanted to crush this girl and break her spirit. And they brought her to the most primitive conditions and they kept tormenting her and teasing her to get her to make any statement about being unjustly imprisoned or that the conditions were too severe or that she would have even so much as a single complaint of anything that she's required to experience. Because if they could get her to confess a complaint, then where is God? This girl never once complained about anything.

She lost her beauty under that confinement and those brutal conditions and she was released five years later praising God for the privilege of sharing the sufferings of Christ. And never once gave the enemy an opportunity by so much as a single complaint because a complaint would have indicated that somehow it

was men who were responsible for her confinement rather than the sovereignty of God. Remember what Jesus said when Pontius Pilate said, Don't you know that I have the power to crucify or release you? And Jesus answered him and said, You could do nothing against me except it were given you from above.

You need to know that also, saints. I don't know if we'll ever be back to the Philippines. I hope we will.

But if not, and this is our last and only opportunity, I think I can safely predict that we are moving toward a final showdown between the principalities and powers of darkness and light. And that we can expect that the veil that has concealed this conflict is going to be removed and we're going to see it in its naked and ugly proportions against the true believers in every land. And the way in which we will bear our last day's affliction and that God will allow the powers of darkness a certain liberty against us is for the same reason that the Father allowed Jesus to be crucified by the rulers of this world.

Because it will result in the same kind of demonstration of the greater wisdom of God. Now don't get panicky or... Well, what is he saying? I'm going to say the same thing again in other ways and your understanding will grow. It's important that you don't panic because panic is already not the wisdom of God.

Because God calls us to arrest. And he will communicate an understanding. So we're getting into a very difficult subject.

A subject that has not been opened to our understanding because basically the church has not been in the kind of condition where it could even understand or act upon these things. But we are coming to the end of the age where God is again establishing these important foundations. I'd like you to turn in the book of Ephesians to chapter 3. We'll come back again, Lord willing, to where we began in 6. It is so remarkable that some scholars say that Paul did not himself write it.

That the language is so unusual that it doesn't sound like the same Paul who gives us other epistles. I believe that it is Paul but Paul under a very special inspiration that touches the deepest questions of the faith. And I think that many of us have missed it because we read too hurriedly or that the word sounds so lofty that it seems too difficult for us.

And we miss the great meanings as I'll show you now in connection with our subject. In chapter 3, and it's so hard to break in here, Paul speaks about revelation and mystery in verse 3. That by revelation there was made known to me the mystery as I wrote before. And by referring to this when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ.

The word mystery does not mean detective story. The word mystery, who can help us to understand what mystery means from the biblical perspective? What is the mystery that Paul is talking about? Paul is, as an apostle, is occupied with the mysteries of God. And that God has given him, because he's an apostle, a certain revelation and understanding into the mysteries that they might be made known.

So what is a mystery, biblically speaking? And hidden so that it might be revealed at a moment of God's appointing. If it's hidden and concealed by God, men themselves cannot obtain it, except that it be revealed by the Spirit. What we need to do as the church of an apostolic kind is to cultivate an appreciation for the mysteries of God and to desire the revelation and the understanding, not because we want to impress people, but because we want to be equipped to understand what our calling is as the church.

So the revelation of the mysteries of God is distinctly the privilege of the calling of an apostle and he says in verse 5, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit. And the word holy is important. If an apostle is less than holy, God will not entrust him with the mysteries of God.

So the character of an apostle and a prophet is critical to their calling and to their function. And what is the mystery? Well, to be specific, in verse 6, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Fellow heirs with whom? This is not my subject this morning, but it doesn't hurt to spend a few minutes on this.

The church itself is a mystery. What's the mystery? That you have been made fellow heirs with someone else and have been made participants in another body. You have made fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise.

With whom? With Israel. The promises of Israel. Faithful and believing Israel.

Not apostate Israel, but the remnant of believers of every generation from the beginning. This is the mystery, saints. If I could establish this with you and go back to our other subject later, this would be worth everything.

We need to know what the church is. It's not some innovation or something that God thought of as a last moment. It is the continuation of the faith once and for all given the saints of Israel.

And you, who were far off, have been brought near and into their faith, their promises, their hopes, their commonwealth by the blood of the Messiah Jesus. So you take it for granted. But do you know how extraordinary it was for the first Jewish Christians to think that God intended the Messiah for non-Jews as well? Peter had to receive a revelation of a sheep coming down with unclean animals.

Remember that? He was in a trance. And the Lord said to him, Take and eat. And he said, But Lord, I've never eaten anything unclean.

You have to understand that Jews were brought up in the law. And Gentiles were looked upon outside the law and unclean. And that the promises of God were only for Israel.

And God had to give Peter a revelation in a trance and say to him three times, Take and eat, take and eat. And he kept complaining, But Lord, I've never. And God said, What I have made clean call thou not unclean.

And when he wakened from that trance, there were Gentiles downstairs knocking on the door to bring Peter to the home of a Gentile Roman soldier who loved righteousness to explain to these Gentiles something about the faith. Or else Peter would not so much have gone inside the house of Gentiles. And when he went in, because he had the trance, and while he was sharing with them, the Holy Spirit fell on Gentiles as had fallen upon Jews on the day of Pentecost.

And they were astonished. And Peter said, How can we withhold water of baptism seeing that they have received the same gift as we? And this started a controversy in the church that took a church council to recognize that God's salvation is intended not only for faithful Jews, but for Gentiles as well. That this is the mystery.

This is a view that the church does not have of itself. And it's very different to see yourself as an expression of God's grace to have brought you in to something that already had a long existence and continuation going back to Abraham. And that you are fellow heirs and sharers of this faith with faithful Jews who have gone before you.

And that Abraham is your father as our father. And the prophets are yours as ours. And the promises of God.

It brings you into an identification and a relationship with the Israel of God of every generation. And I don't mean the present political state. It will change everything if you could understand that mystery.

And Paul as the apostle was given the revelation. It took a revelation and to communicate that mystery. So what is now being revealed in verse 5 to his holy apostles and prophets in the spirit? Well to be specific that the Gentiles, the non-Jews are fellow heirs and fellow members of the Jewish body.

And fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Who can tell me what the word Christ itself means? Is that Jesus' first name or his family name? When I was a Jewish kid growing up in Brooklyn, New York and somebody said Jesus Christ I thought well that has nothing to do with me. I don't know of any Jew whose last name is Christ.

Really. I didn't know that Christ is not a name. It's a title.

And what is that title? What does that word mean? It comes from the Greek Christos. But the Greek is a translation of the Hebrew word which would give us a clearer understanding of who Jesus is. And what is the Hebrew word? Nobody wants an A for the day and go to the head of the class? Messiah.

And the Hebrew word is Messiah or as we say in English Messiah. It's Jesus the Messiah. And the word Messiah is distinctly a Hebrew term.

It has to do with the Hebrew faith with Hebrew expectancy with the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecies that a Messiah would come and deliver Israel from its sin. So by that Messiah you also have been brought in. You see? It's the mystery of the church made up now of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles into one new man.

Isn't that fantastic? God forbid that we should take a mystery as glorious as that and reduce it to a religion. And if you had been with us yesterday morning at the Christian Missionary Alliance Church I spoke on Romans 11 to show the mystery even further that God now looks to you who were non-Jews who have been brought in to the faith of Israel to make those Jews who are outside that faith jealous that they too will believe. Where Paul says have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid that you should think that.

But through their fall salvation has come to the Gentiles so as to move them to jealousy. Can you see the design of God? Can you see the wisdom of God? You need to understand the historic enmity between Gentiles and Jews. I've already explained to you that the law itself made Jews to be very suspicious and resistant to things that were non-Jewish.

They looked upon Gentiles as unclean because the Gentiles did not have the law. The Gentiles fornicated. The Gentiles got drunk.

The Gentiles beat their wives. The Gentiles lived hardly better than animals. They had not the law.

They had not the knowledge of God. And they were to be kept from contact lest their own faith would be corrupted or polluted. And so there was always a tension between Jews and non-Jews all through the ages until Christ came and broke down the middle wall of partition that we might all become one in Him.

It's a mystery and it had to be revealed. And you know what the sad thing is? The mystery has been lost to us. And we take the Church for granted and we think it's an institution all by itself and it's interesting maybe to look at Israel historically but it has no present connection and miss the entire genius of God's wisdom in establishing the Church not as a new novelty but the continuation of the faith that now includes non-Jews as well.

You who are far off and without hope and without God in the world have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah Jesus into the covenants and promises and hope of Israel and into the very commonwealth of Israel. Are you pleased for that? You know there's a remarkable identity crisis in the world. People just don't even know who they are.

I came from a conference in Canada only a few weeks ago where young people your age stood up at the microphone and said we don't know who we are. We don't know what our past is. We don't know what our future is.

They've forbidden us to speak our native language and yet we can't fit into Canadian society. We don't know who we are. It's very important that we as the Church know who we are because we have a brilliant past.

How many people can boast of having fathers of the faith like Abraham Isaac and Jacob and the patriarchs and the prophets and the apostles and all that has gone before us is yours as well as mine. You have been brought near and you have been brought on before us is yours as well as mine. You have been brought near and you have been brought in to that inheritance.

And you have a glorious future. But your future is also related to Israel's. Their restoration.

And in fact God calls you to be the instrument by which those branches that were broken off shall again be grafted in. Well, that's not my subject for today. But I couldn't help but say a little bit about it seeing that there it is in chapter 3. But let's continue.

So Paul says in verse 7 He was made a minister of these mysteries according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. To me the very least of all saints this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Messiah. And to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery how many times now has Paul used the word which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

Now this is what we want to concentrate on. This is a remarkable statement. This is awesome.

This is a mystery. But if we don't understand it it's like a church like a car running without wheels. This is our purpose our greater purpose, our larger purpose to make known the manifold wisdom of God.

How important is this to God? It says the God who created all things that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church. What that is saying is what it is saying that God created all things. That means the earth nations the solar system the cycles of nature the ability of men to live on this planet earth for one principal reason that the church might demonstrate to the principalities and powers of the air the manifold wisdom of God.

Now don't panic again. Let's take this a little bit at a time. Paul's making an astonishing statement that gives us the reason for which God has given the church.

So important in God's sight that he did not hesitate or think it extravagant to create all things. That the whole of creation in God's sight is to make possible the church. What do you think of that? This is turning everything upside down.

The world thinks that it was created for itself that it could have its great cities its commerce, its trade, its culture all the things that men celebrate. And the church is a Sunday thing that society is willing to allow to exist if it doesn't bother the men of the world and the things important to them. Can you see that everything has been inverted turned upside down and contrary to what God says.

That the whole of creation is in order that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be demonstrated to the principalities and powers of the air. We're going to talk again about what that wisdom is but for now just to understand the setting the whole great issue of why God has established the church is to make a demonstration. And it can only be made by the church.

And it's not even to be made to men in the world. It's to be made to this invisible realm of principalities and powers that somehow that is important in God's sight. So important as to justify creation itself.

Am I... Is that making any sense? All of these categories shatter all that we have understood. We've had an inferiority complex about the church. We see it as established to provide men with certain blessings and meeting of their needs.

And that's not the purpose for which God has given it. And in fact until we identify that purpose and look to the fulfilling of it we never will meet the needs of men. We've got to understand the majesty of God's intention for the church that has nothing to do with any practical benefit that comes to us.

It's something that serves the purposes of God alone in something which is important to Him. Any church that will agree with that and take to itself God's purposes as being the reason for its existence though it has no practical benefit for itself is already demonstrating the wisdom of God. Because what is the wisdom of the world? Two wisdoms are in conflict.

Maybe the word wisdom might confuse you. It's not wisdom in the sense of enlightened learning. Okay, I'm trying to do that.

Maybe the word wisdom would be better understood as two moral orders. Two ways of perceiving reality and what is truth and what is value are in conflict. So what is the basic wisdom of the world to which almost all men subscribe as being true? Take care of number one.

See to your own self-interest for if you don't, who will? Self-interest is the heart of the wisdom of this world's darkness. It speaks for itself. It's self-evident.

It's logical. Reality itself teaches that. Take care of number one.

See to your own self-interest. It's interesting that that is the basis right now by which Israel is trying to obtain peace with its enemies both within and without the Palestinians within and the Arab nations around it by appealing to the self-interest of the Arabs and saying to them, peace is in your best interest. Put away your aggressive intentions against us and share in the prosperity that will come when we will be together, the Hong Kong of the Middle East.

It's in your best interest to give up violence and make peace with us so that you can share in the benefit of peace which will be prosperity. What are they not recognizing? That men are not ruled by what they think is self-interest. That there are demonic forces bent upon Israel's destruction and that will overtake them.

But the whole peace proposal is based on a certain kind of human wisdom that men will respond to their own self-interest. What is in it for me? And what would you say is the condition of the church? What would you say of ministers who go to Bible school so that they can make a name for themselves and establish their ministry and go from youth leader to associate pastor and one day they'll become the senior pastor and go from a smaller church to a larger church is based on what's in it for me. So long as we ourselves are affected and ruled by self-interest, we have nothing to say to the principalities and powers of the air.

And how can we be free from this enormous power of self-interest that seems to be built right into human nature itself? Nature itself is like that. Animals are like that. Each thing... I mean, have you ever gone fishing and tried to put a worm on a hook? They squiggle and they writhe and they do everything to get off that hook and they're just stinking worms.

There's something in protoplasm itself that lives for itself to preserve itself in its own self-interest. How much more in men? That's why God had to do something powerful to break that power. And he did it at the cross.

Come down, people said, and we will believe you. But he could not. Because had he come down, had he been able to come down, had he been seeking his self-interest and the preservation of his own life, he would have contradicted the wisdom of God itself.

Staying on the cross, unto death, exhibited another kind of wisdom where your reason for living is not for yourself, but for another. God and his glory is the wisdom of God. It takes a power to be released from self-interest to live for the glory of God and that power is in the cross itself.

This is so foundational. This is at the heart of the whole matter. So I don't mind repeating it until it comes into your spirit and understanding.

The church that does not understand this, what can we say for it? However much it may bless men, it does not begin to serve the purposes of God who made it. These are serious words and we need to study them and ponder them word for word. And Paul is setting forth a great mystery that is at the foundation of everything.

Creation itself. We are told why God created the world. In order that, when we read that, in order that, we ought to almost stop breathing.

Wow, what is it going to mean? What is he going to say now? What is the purpose of creation? In order that what? And the next word is that through the church How can we? We ought to go down on our faces.

The church? Is the church that important to God? That he did not think it too extravagant to create the worlds and put them in such relationship that the earth would continue and have a way of supporting life that there could be a place where the church could exist in the nations? We need to elevate our whole sense of the significance of the church. Or we are living beneath the glory of God and cannot fulfill his purposes.

Okay. So God has created all things that in order through the church the manifold that means the variable rich, many-sided wisdom of God which is completely in opposition to the wisdom of the world in every point in particular can be demonstrated through the church that's the only agency that can exhibit God's wisdom to the principalities and powers of the air. And when that demonstration will be made the powers of the air that have dominated the nations and our own communities and have jerked and manipulated men and races that have given us punk rock culture and world wars one and two and a world war three and everything that has corrupted man and marred the image of God in man will be finally defeated by this demonstration that can only come through the church.

And that raises the question a church of what kind? A church that takes for itself and its main purpose for being the fulfillment of this mystery. That's the kind of church that consciously takes to itself God's purpose of demonstrating this wisdom. The church corporately with its young girls its older men with the differences in generation the differences in race the difference in culture whatever it is that together as the church the church itself expresses another wisdom from God.

And I just don't mean with our mouths but that we demonstrate it in the life of the church free from intimidation from fear from insecurity from lust from ambition from all the kinds of things that are the other wisdom. And that's why it can only be done by the church. We need each other for something like this because we will everyday be tempted to condescend to the wisdom of this world and employ its methods its ways its manipulations like for example I don't know about the Filipino children but isn't there a way that children can act and pout and get their way by manipulating their parents? It's interesting that Israel in the last days was ruled by its children.

And we're moving toward that now in the world. When a wife wants to manipulate a husband she can pout or look hurt or offended or sulk or now what's wrong with you dear? Well I'd rather not say. You're too insensitive to understand anyway.

Well here, go and buy yourself a new dress. She has accomplished something through manipulation which is the wisdom of this world. A pastor from the platform or a visiting evangelist knowing how to play upon the emotions of his hearers will give an invitation or an appeal in such a way as to get the people to come out of the pews and down to the front through manipulation.

Instead of what? Trusting the spirit of God himself to bring conviction. We are every day tempted to condescend to the ways and the wisdom of this world. But the wisdom of God is in weakness and in foolishness.

God has chosen the foolish things to confound the wise and the weak things to confound the mighty. Psalm 8 I think talks about out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God has perfected wisdom. See verse 2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

What does it mean that you might still? It means you might shut the mouth up. You might defeat. You might bring to nothing the enemy and the avenger.

How? Through ordaining strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings because of your enemies. Listen saints. The enemies are running the show.

The enemies celebrate power pomp, prestige name, fame all the kinds of things that men admire. And when that comes into our religion we are finished. I wish you had heard last night's message about blessed is he who comes on the name of the Lord on the back of an ass upon which never man sat.

Blessed is the kingdom that comes in the name of the Lord in the same humility and foolishness and weakness as Jesus came down the sharp slope of the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem in his triumphal entry. We would say triumphal means motorcycles, limousines, public officials, banners for the hot shot. But Jesus chose to come in the way of humility for your king shall come to you lowly and meek riding on the back of an ass the colt, the foal of an ass not even the full grown animal but the weak and unformed thing that never has sustained the weight of a man before.

That is a picture of humiliation and it is the key to the kingdom. I'm just kind of noticing these days that certain men like to wear cellular telephones in their belt. Maybe that's the modern day equivalent of putting a pistol in your in your, what you know something on your belt, you know and hoist and show you throw your weight around and These are not small things.

This is a cosmic conflict. And you say, well, so what if he wants to wear a cellular phone? Well, it's a step in the wrong direction. It gives an air of prestige because right away you know that he has the finances to afford that.

And he must be important or else he wouldn't need it. And I wondered at what moment he was going to get the telephone call. You see what I mean? Now, wouldn't you be much more impressed this morning if it was Benny Hinn speaking? When we associate names with prestige and following.

But I want to tell you that if I know anything about God his most significant work will be performed through men who no one knows. Someone said to me, Art Do you know anybody else who talks like you? Has your view and your perspective that can be called prophetic today? And I think of those who have that label. No, not that one.

No, not that one. I said, you know, I have to say, I'm embarrassed but I really can't think of any name that I could say is really authentically prophetic today. But I want you to know that because I can't name them does not mean that they don't exist.

That if they are truly prophetic then they are more likely to be unknown. And Paul said this about himself. Unknown, but well-known.

Unknown to men perhaps, but well-known not only to God, but to the principalities and the powers of the air. As I said last night in my message they know who they must fear. They know who they must respect.

They know who has authority. They know who have kept themselves from the spirit of the world and from wearing cellular phones in their belt and exhibiting prestige or having ambition because those men are of no consequence whatsoever to those powers because they share the same wisdom as the powers. Can you follow that? God has chosen the foolish and the weak thing.

He's chosen babes and sucklings to ordain strength to stop the mouth of his enemy. So if what I have been saying is not yet enough let me give you the punchline which is the very next verse in Ephesians 3. Verse 10 said that God created all things in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. And verse 11 says this was in accordance with the eternal purpose which he carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is not just a purpose of God it is the eternal purpose of God. And I don't know what to say about that. How many of us have any sense of the word eternity itself? How many of us think well that's something that has to do with after you die and don't understand the weight of that word the meaning of that word the eternal purpose the undying, unchallenging ever-continuing purpose of God.

The thing that makes the church so weak and ineffectual today is its failure to take eternity into its deepest consideration. We are not living for eternal purposes and that fixes us in time. And that's why we're jerked and that's why we're manipulated by fashions and fads.

Why does the cellular phone become attractive? Because that's the thing now that is the symbol of prestige. But what will it be tomorrow? Well some new thing or some new fashion some new kind of music some this, some that and we will be vulnerable and susceptible to these changing things if we are not rooted in the things that are eternal. Listen children I'm not waiting to die to enter eternity.

I am in eternity now. Eternity is not only things future but it includes things past. It includes the present.

Like what is apostolic? Apostolic is a certain way of seeing. It's a certain mindset. It's a certain understanding and attitude as for example that this morning is not just day one of a seminar but it is an eternal moment whose time has come and will never be given again.

Am I exaggerating? How many of us look upon time as being set in eternity? That every moment is an eternal now not to be given again. That changes everything. That gives a significance to now that it didn't have before.

Because when this moment passes we've lost it. We've got to see time as set in eternity. That we are called to the eternal purposes of God.

You say but brother well that's going to make you irrelevant. You're going to be so up in the clouds you'll be so lost. You'll be so heavenly minded you'll be no earthly good.

Where is that in the Bible? I want to say that that is the wisdom of the world and that the wisdom of God is exactly the opposite. Except that you be heavenly minded you're no earthly good. What we need in the earth is heaven more heaven.

What we need to communicate to men is the sense of the things that are eternal and that this present world is passing away. That's why Paul says in some place in his letters how we should live in this present world. He uses the phrase this present world.

Why? Because it implies that the present world is not always the world that will be. How we should live now in this present world as something that is passing away because the saints are looking to the thing that shall come that is everlasting and eternal. What a privilege to be invited to participate in the eternal purposes of God.

I'll tell you once that comes into your spirit you're ruined for anything less. You're ruined for anything that's shabby for any program or any kind of thing that seems to be exciting. You just don't respond.

You are in another realm of the things that are eternal and it has affected all of your seeing. And that's God's intention for the church. The church that does not take eternity into its consideration is not the church.

And once you have taken eternity into your consideration what difference does it make if you're promoted? If you're recognized? If you're elevated? If you're made this, that or the other? These are small things inconsequential because you view and you see all things through an eternal perspective. I'll show you this very practically in the book of Hebrews chapter 10. Paul is writing to saints who have really struggled in the faith and have suffered persecution.

And he says to them in verse 32 call to remembrance the former days in which after you were illuminated you endured a great fight of afflictions. Now to be a believer in the early church was to suffer persecution. And I believe that that's going to be true at the end also.

Those that live godly lives in Christ will suffer persecution. And so it's instructive to us to see how others endured and why they were able to bear it. Because the wisdom of this world says avoid any kind of suffering.

Seek to your self-interest. The pursuit of happiness is in the American credo itself. Right in the Declaration of Independence.

We hold these truths to be self-evident. In other words, we don't need Bible or scripture to support them. That all men are created equal and should enjoy liberty and to seek their own happiness as the wisdom of the world.

But to endure suffering is the wisdom of Christ. So you endured a great fight of afflictions in verse 32. Partly while you were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions and partly while you became companions of them that were so used.

For you had compassionately in my bonds and here's the point now and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. These saints to whom Paul is writing have not only suffered affliction they were stripped of their earthly goods but they took it with a different attitude. They counted it all joy.

Why? Because they knew within themselves that they had in heaven which is to say eternally a more enduring substance. You know what the devil is wanting to do? Is to make heaven a fairy tale and to make hell something of no consequence. The devil wants to rob men of the sense of eternity and of eternal destiny both of judgment and of reward.

And by so doing remove the very foundation of reality itself. The understanding of eternity and what lies beyond this life either for eternal good or eternal evil is the very foundation for present reality. And people who have not an understanding of that which is future and eternal are of necessity deceived.

We mustn't allow the enemy to steal from us, the church this eternal dimension for if we lose it how shall the world ever know of it? The only way that the world can know that there's an everlasting good or evil that is determined in this life by one's conduct and one's decisions is by a presence of a church in their

midst who live now in the eternal dimension. And we will be tested as I have been tested where my goods have been stripped. And this wasn't too long ago when the Lord called us back to our own community after three years in the grave and I gave a young man an opportunity to live on the property before anyone came back.

He was divorced, he was living with a pig in a hut and two dogs and I gave him a place to live and helped support him that he would watch over the property and just maintain it until God would bring life back to that property. And he was there for a year and a half. I even helped with his payments for his children in the support payments.

And he was a rather strange man and people warned me not to take a risk with him but I'm always willing to take a risk in the hope of something redemptive. Well, in the year and a half we had acquired seven horses and horse-drawn agricultural equipment because we believe that there's a time coming when we will not enjoy the benefit of electric power and diesel fuel. When we have to farm with our own labor and horse-drawn equipment and we were acquiring that kind of equipment which is not cheap.

And then after a year and a half this brother said that he wanted to leave. And I was in Chicago ministering and he called me on the telephone and he said, what shall I take? I thought to myself, well maybe take half of all that we have accumulated in this time. And the brother who was with me said let him take what he thinks is right.

So I said to him on the phone well why don't you just take what you think is right? Thinking to myself, certainly if he takes half it's far more than he has any right to obtain. When I came back to the house and to the farm there was nothing left. All seven horses gone.

A vehicle, a truck, gone. Every tool, every nut, every bolt, every pin, gone. We were stripped.

And a matter of fact it was more than he could carry away by himself. He found some of my Christian friends to help him. And not one thought to ask do you really deserve all of this for the mere year and a half that you've been here? Aren't you overdoing it? They carried away everything.

And when I saw that the first thing that wanted to rise up in my heart was resentment, irritation. And the Lord said don't you dare give yourself to that kind of wisdom. Take your stripping with joy.

For God is able to replace everything that was taken and he can give back in heaven in greater measure the things that are enduring and eternal than what you have lost that can rust and fade away. Listen, dear children. Heaven is not some fairy tale.

Eternity is not just a word. It's God's practical provision for us now to live in a way that we could not otherwise live. In a freedom from fear and from insecurity and from things and the need to possess and to have and to have prestige and to be recognized that exhibits another wisdom.

We must take eternity into our consideration. And God says that I have created all things in order that through the church this wisdom might be demonstrated to the powers of the air and this is the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus. I don't have a word to say what a privilege it is to have an invitation as a member of the church to participate in the eternal purposes of God.

It is totally liberating. You can walk through this world like a giant in God and of what shall you be afraid? And of what shall you be intimidated? You're caught up with God in his eternal purposes. And I believe,

looking at my German brother here, it was for the want of this kind of apostolic Christianity that Germany was opened to the invasion and the domination of the principalities and powers not content merely to influence the German nation but to possess it.

Because nature abhors a vacuum and wherever there is a lack of reality in will come this demonic spirit realm and take over. It's no accident that Hitler talked about a thousand year Reich. What was he doing? He was giving to Germans a purpose for being larger than life of a magnitude that should have been theirs in the Christian faith.

But instead of an apostolic Christianity they had a liberal Lutheranism or an orthodoxy that was equally as dead. But the important point is however Paul obtained it and however much it was expressed by him that is God's definitive intention for the church itself. For the church is founded on the... the church is established on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

Not just what they know and what they understand but what they are in themselves. Paul just didn't have a head full of notions. He was the thing in itself.

And that is what apostolic is. Apostolic is not just a viewpoint. It's the thing in itself.

It's incorporated into the man. It is his life. It's his thought.

It's his speech. It's his heart. He's solely given over to the jealousy for God's glory.

He's the man who sees the things that are invisible and eternal and sees the invisible weight of glory and counts his present afflictions as both momentary and light. Here's a man that was beaten, left for dead, stoned, shipwrecked and he counts all that as momentary and light. So that shows that it was more than just a viewpoint but something so internalized as to take his sufferings and make them light.

Yes. I would say that this moment in history for the church is a time of restoration. That God is restoring and bringing back the things that have been lost to the church in modern times because we have moved away from these apostolic foundations and have become an institutionalized church that has lost the sense of them.

And the way that he does it is by restoring again men with these offices. And so God gives to the church first apostles and prophets and evangelists, pastors, teachers and I believe that now we're beginning to see men functioning in these offices because they are foundational men who can come to the church and can communicate the revelation of these things. That's what I'm about this morning.

And that's maybe one of the reasons that we're hearing some of these things for the first time because a teacher is not called by God to communicate them. Only a foundational man, apostle, prophet can speak of the foundations of the church because his speaking is more than instruction. His speaking is event.

That's why Paul says when you heard the word of God from me you received it for what it was not the word of man but the word of God which performs a work in them that believe. I want to say that to encourage you that I know that much of what I'm saying is complicated and going over your head and you're not able to grasp it.

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