

The Mystery of Incarnation (9 of 9)

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon delves into the complexities of the incarnation, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between faith, suffering, and personal history with God.

Duration: 55:25

Scripture: Acts 13:2, 1 Corinthians 14:26, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 2:6, Ephesians 4:30, Philippians 2:13, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Incarnation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses frustration with certain individuals who present the gospel in a formulaic and smug manner, without acknowledging the struggles and contradictions of faith. The church is described as crippled, underfed, and lacking active participation. The speaker emphasizes the need for individuals to make a free choice to truly understand and live out their faith. The sermon concludes by highlighting the tension and suffering that comes with faith, but also the hope and confidence that believers can have in the ultimate victory and salvation found in Jesus Christ.

Transcript

So his growth, in what he was and not simply what he might be, his unique relation to God was a relation to a free God and not to a mechanical or physical fate or to an invincible bias to good. There's a freedom here and a growth in the knowledge of his own vocation and of the Father who sent him to fulfill it. It is here alone that we grasp God's real presence and rest on it forever.

Valuable as speculative versions of the incarnation may be, we only really have it and believe in it when we sit inside it by the saving action which sets us in Christ and assures us of the incredible fact that we are included by God's strange grace in the same love, wherewith he loves his only begotten Son. That's why Paul could say, who could separate us from this love? Can persecution and terror and want? He makes a whole list of things. No, we're certain of this love because he who gave his Son, will he not with him give us all things? There's a knowledge of the love of God, the saving action which sets us in Christ.

Salvation is not just a technical thing, you're saved. Next, there's a coming into something, a redemptive reality. Christ in us, the hope of glory, we're saved, the life of God has come in, that we are included by God's strange grace in the same love, wherewith he loves his only begotten Son.

We are only sure of the incarnation, only as those who taste the benefit of Christ's death in union with him. He's writing around 1909, at a time when the higher criticism was beginning to come out from German

theologians. And maybe Jesus is just an example, and not really the Son of God.

And salvation is just a mental attitude of reform, by which certain principles now can be humanly conducted. He's fighting for the true faith, and against an environment that was already becoming hostile, and reaching out even into England. And now look at the Church of England, homosexuals and made bishops and scandal, because what he saw already in his early time has now come full bore.

So it doesn't begin as a finished article. It begins with certain possibilities, with a destiny ingrained in the protoplast, but it only passes from a destiny into a perfection through a career. It only passes from a destiny into a perfection through a career.

He's using the word career not as a piece of professionalism, but through a history, through something tested in time, through actualities, through issues, through crises, through morals struggling, through groanings. Now Jesus even came to the place of being perplexed with his own disciples. How long must I suffer you? There's a pain in his own humanity.

So it comes to fulfillment through a walk and a history. Do you have a history with God? Do you have to wait to be an old crock like me before you realize that you have a history? Ought you not to be conscious even at whatever stage you are in the faith that there is already a history, and there is a continuing history with God, of which you need to be conscious and to cherish. That it's yours uniquely.

No one else has your history, your career so to speak, with God. It is yours uniquely, and he has set it up. He's brought the anger into your life.

He's brought you to Nowheresville in northern Minnesota. He's done this, he's done that. He calls for this, he calls for that.

The struggles, the crises, it's all designed. It's all skillfully crafted. He's a master craftsman for the formation of sons.

But you have a history, and it needs to be a conscious history, and a history of which you are appreciative and grateful. I am grateful for my history with God. Just think of how many times I'm citing from my experiences to make a point here with you.

But I've got the experience to cite. I have a history, a confidence, a knowledge, of being sustained for 41 years, and being on these grounds for 31 years, in poverty, in the extreme arctic cold, and all of the struggles with the Jesus freaks that came to Venezuela and were right behind the ears, and brought their rusty old cars and said, hey, we're giving you this. We're giving our all.

But you now see to it that there's food on the table, and heat in the houses, and that there are houses. Your faith. Here's our rusty old junker, and all the indignities.

And to be told by these same ones later that you yourself are a traitor to the gospel. One of these people heard me publicly in Texas a couple of years ago, and she came up weeping. I mean, heartbroken.

And she said, Art, I never knew you. I was in the community for such and such a time. I glimpsed you in that context.

But until I've heard you publicly, I never really understood or seen you. She said, you need to tell all the Venezuelans. They need to find some occasion where they see or hear you outside of this place in

functioning in your call.

So until she saw that, how did she treat me? Improperly, without due respect, because she's a young snot. And she saw through the limitation of her own humanity and came to certain conclusions. And do you have to bear that? Okay.

And Jesus suffered the same thing in Nazareth. Isn't this Joseph's son? So by having given due effect to each side, how can we have these apparent contradictions united in one historic personality? Absolute God and man? Absolute finality and growing attainment? Absolute grace and growing in grace? The victory won and the victory to be won? The kingdom come and the kingdom coming? How are we to adjust the contradiction between the absolute and the merging in this concrete and crucial case? On the threshold of such inquiry, let me remind you once more that it is only in the illogical, that which is not logical, unity of a person for whose action and growth they are necessary that we find the harmony of several antinomies that defy rational adjustment. You know what our problem is? Our English is not adequate.

This is perfectly coherent and well written. So he's summing up here. How do we reconcile the infinite with the finite, the humanity with the deity, the absolute God and relative man, growth in grace and the absolute grace, the victory won, the victory yet to be won, the kingdom come, the kingdom coming? How are we to adjust the contradiction between what is absolute in God and what is merging and forming in this concrete and crucial case? Do you realize that the faith is a tension? It's not cut and dried.

The faith is a dynamic. And you know that tension is a suffering? And that many people refuse to say yes to the Lord because they intuit that they don't want to come in to this kind of reality that requires of them a continual tension of faith. They like it in the world where they have it cut and dried, they know and they live by their own understanding and it's their baby.

They don't want to enter a realm where the modus operandi is faith. Faith is a tension of apparent contradiction. Marriage between a Jew and a Gentile, a sophisticated university graduate and a simple village girl is a contradiction.

But in that contradiction and the toughing of it out comes revelation and depths of growth that could not be obtained in any other way. So that even our own life is a minuscule version of the mystery of the faith itself. And we would not be willing to suffer it if we did not glimpse it in the faith itself.

See what I mean? If we did not realize that suffering is intrinsic, that contradiction is fundamental, that something is not cut and dried but it's a dynamic and process of formation to which we need to give ourselves interest. Meanwhile, suffering the scandal of the thing that is not yet formed. Because one of the greatest things we've had to bear, how can art be in a place of authority when his marriage da da da da da and his family da da da is not together? And who can give answer? That we're living out something of a prophetic kind.

This reconciliation of Jew and Gentile, the prophetic man with the church in his present carnal condition. And that it's not going to be done overnight in the waving of a magic wand. But doesn't it say that you have your house in order? How do you answer those things? And if people want to be rejecting both of the man and his word, they can find grounds.

So you suffer, not only the struggle in attaining, but you suffer the accusations and the indictments and the way in which you're perceived by others. You live the scandal. Jesus was a scandal.

The cross was a scandal. The gospel is a scandal. But Paul was not ashamed of it.

Because in that scandal is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, especially to the Jew first. So, Jesus was a scandal. The cross was a scandal.

The gospel is a scandal. But Paul was not ashamed of it. Because in that scandal is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

Okay. So, we are at the threshold of such an inquiry that we need to be reminded that it is only in the illogical or the non-logical unity of a person. How is this mystery and tension presented to us? It comes in a person who is both truly God, and truly man, for whose action and growth they are necessary.

He would not have come to his career, he would not have come to the fulfillment of his vocation, except through the walking out of these contradictions. And there we find the harmony of the several contradictions that defy rational adjustment. That cannot be classified and categorized in a neat little doctrine.

That's why I chafed by watching that video of those guys. They have it all together. There's something so smart and so smug in the way they talk about the gospel of the faith that doesn't give any indication of groaning, of struggle.

It's a nice formula that they've learned and they can market and market it well and live comfortably, if not lavishly on that basis. But I don't sense in them even their voice, their attitude, or their speaking, a sense of the wrestling with this faith of contradiction. But that they have reduced it to a formula.

It's a formulaic Christianity, and they have it all together. And prospering at it. Why then are we knocking about and... I'm chafed by that easy similitude called Christianity to which you're... to give your seed faith that you might receive.

Even that's reduced to a formula that accounts for their great prosperity. And there's something... Do you have to be doctrinally false to be false? No. Maybe the most dangerous deception and the worst kinds of falsity of... Fraudulence? Of deception is those who speak the technical truth of it without the spirit of its truth.

And have reduced it to a sterile thing that robs it of its beauty and its glory. That's a more dangerous thing than actual heresy. This is the danger of the last days.

Those that are technically correct and miss the glory of the faith. And all you have to do is add the music, the worship, the themes, the acoustics, the amplifiers, a happy guy or woman on the platform leading and all that, and they'll come in droves. That's a cheap alternative.

It's an idolatry. It's a version of the golden calf around which they dance nakedly. Okay.

Coming to a conclusion, Forsythe says, he grew in the grace in which he always was, and in the knowledge of it. He grew in the knowledge even of his own calling. As his personal history enlarged and ripened by every experience, and as he was always found equal to each moral crisis, the latent godhead became more and more mighty as his life's interior and asserted itself with the more power as the

personality grew, both in depth and scope.

This guy has a handle on something. And in fact he says, the more his divine soul renounced his immunities, the more he acquired his glory. He said that something came in gathering power through growing humiliation came to a growing exaltation.

That in German, er starb und wurde, he died and he became. That the greater deity emerged not by his insistence on his god origin, but on his forsaking. That he went up by going down.

That he grew by dying. That he acquired his divine soul as he renounced the immunities that he could have employed as being god as well as man. And so, the more he acquired his glory.

How is it that P.T. Forsythe sees it and the Copelands do not? I'm not making an issue of a particular man, but what he represents in his static cut and dried get it all down to a formula of a particular personality and toothy grin and the best of all worlds and happy am I. How is it that that's how he interprets the faith as against how Forsythe interprets it. Same faith, same data, but to one it's been reduced to a glib formula and to the other it was a coming inside the mystery of living it out and understanding and wrestling and seeing the implications for his own humanity and seeing that God was demonstrating immutable and eternal principles that you attain glory not by grasping and clutching but by forsaking and letting go. I remember in one of our trips to Israel we visited a congregation that had both Palestinian Christians and Jews and there was a fight on over a menorah that was on the platform.

The Jewish believers wanted to retain it and the Palestinian Christians wanted to remove it because it was too ostensibly a Jewish symbol and they were in the heat of conflict over that thing and we were just stupefied to learn about it. We came back into the bus and walked into my seat and one of the ladies in our group pulled my sleeve she said, you know what the answer is? I said, what? She said, relinquish. Relinquish.

What a golden word. The Jews have to relinquish their insistence and the Palestinians need to relinquish their animosity. Relinquishing is the key to glory not insistence and has been demonstrated by the son of God in becoming a son and it's our way also.

The more his divine soul renounced his immunities the more he acquired a glory. More and more as he laid by what he eternally was he came to be what he began by being. The eternal son learned by suffering the sonship he had never forgotten and this was the positive process of the long act of our salvation.

Our redemption was the achieving also of his old incarnation, the growing involution of these two movements descent and ascent was the process of the reconciliation of God in the world. The consummation came, it was all secured where it could never be undone but it must be forever unfolded for what it is and not to what it might be made to become. It always needs to be unfolded for the glory that it is and never allow it to settle into a formula.

That's our jealous keeping of the faith lest it will become a formula because formulas are convenient but the mysteries of faith are difficult and painful both to understand and to fulfill. So thus the sinless growth of Christ's character is in the very act growth also of his objective achievement for us. It is the moral process of man's salvation, the gradual act of God.

Christ's perfect progress to perfection, the achieving of his finished work is the detail of God's act of our redemption of his absolute and holy love and his holy son. His self-sanctification was ours also. Christ

worked out the salvation he was.

It was only in history and its conditions that he could realize all that was super historic within him. He was exercised unto the godliness he brought with him. The deepening of his faithfulness was the emergence of his deity.

He was not acquiring deity, he was unfolding it. And in his lowest limits, his divinest mastery showed. In the lowest limits, where was that? At the cross.

His divinest mastery shows. The glory of the deity that was his, that he forfeited and acquired by process of growth is shown not in its most powerful demonstration but in its weakest. And that's why the centurion at the foot of the cross, seeing this man writhing in excruciating pain but not condemning his persecutors, but praying their forgiveness and then giving up the ghost.

He said, truly, this was the Son of God. Something was revealed in the lowest limit of Jesus' obedience unto death of his divinest mastery. And don't forget, we operate equally in that same absolute freedom.

We're not compelled to walk in the works that were established before the foundations of the earth were laid. And if they're going to be fulfilled, it will not be something compulsory but something free. God is not going to allow anything that pertains to his glory in the earth to be obtained by anything other than the means by which Jesus obtained it and made himself a candidate in his freedom, voluntary and free, which is a great responsibility and an anguish to be responsible in your freedom.

And how many of us are forfeiting that moral aspect of our life by not acting in it and coming to a place of indifference, neither up nor down, neither yet so known, neither with it nor against it, but in limbo. We're not acting as sons because the act is a statement of a freedom of choice and a decision to be obedient so we can guard ourselves from even that necessity and allow a structure of life to be formed around us by which we're kept from the necessity of acting in freedom. There's a great classic of sociology, Eric from freedom Escape from Freedom came out in the 1960s or 70s in which he says totalitarianism, the rise of Nazism, fascism, communism is a statement that modern man rejects his freedom.

He's afraid of it. He doesn't want to act in responsibility. He wants a welfare state.

He wants those things decided from and provided. He doesn't want to take the initiative of being a man. He wants a system from the cradle to the grave that will secure his existence and make unnecessary his requirement to act.

You think that that's a finished issue? Or is it the issue of the age? And if the church will not exercise its freedom in its sonship, what do we call the world? What is our example? What is our challenge? If we ourselves are in flight from freedom, choosing not to or even to be phrased, we want an environment that frees us from the necessity to have to choose and to have to act. And isn't that the reason why we've grown up a church system where the man on the platform does it all? And what he is really is a CEO that the most impressive ministers of our generation are executives who make the decisions. And all we have to come on a Sunday is put a few bucks on a collection plate and sit passively, we're entertained, and we go home.

We don't want the responsibility of being a saint. I was talking with Bill the other day where Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14 when you come together, everyone has a tongue and interpretation of prophecy in a revelation. That's why Paul could leave those fellowships.

They would nourish each other by their own freedom and yielding to the gift that God had given them. And when he came back two years later, they were still functioning and flourishing. And then he would recognize who it is that has risen to the place of authority by their freedom to take responsibility.

That's how you identify an elder. And then he would just set them in before the congregation with fasting and prayer. And that's how the church was formed.

But how does the church now continue? It's crippled, it's languishing, it's underfed, it's malnourished, it's lost its participation. It's an audience, it's a theater of performance from the platform and passive acquiescence in the congregation for which we gladly pay the bill, so long as we are freed from the necessity to have a tongue and interpretation of prophecy and so on. Freedom is the name of the game.

And that's what Ben Israel has been in its history. And he would say, why don't you make these guys clean up? Why don't you make these guys do this or do that? I said, we could easily do it, but what would it be? Would it be like a training camp? They're not going to become mentioned, they're not going to become persons and sons except by a free choice. They need to see, they need to act, they need to do.

Anyone can tell you they need themselves to see and to act. And of course, what does that mean? It's going to take a long time. The garbage will grow up until you have to step over it to get out of the house.

Until they see it, my God, they're Jesus freaks who've lived in garbage and they don't even know. But for a woman from Denmark with Ordnung, a German word of order, for her it was chafing to have to live with people in that condition. Why don't you just do it? Why don't you establish it? Where's your authority? Well, we have it, but if we rob men of their freedom, we rob them of their humanity.

We rob them of their sonship. We just make mechanical dolts out of them. Of course they'll do it, but there's something more than doing its being in the form of the Son of God, who is entirely free in every aspect of his life, as are we.

So the total bearing of his action or speech means that his action arose ethically out of what he was, and that his courage expressed his soul, that his vocation rested on his position, that his receptivity is the greatest human activity, that he was first and foremost the ever-receptive son of the Holy Father, and that he only did the things which were sworn to him of God. His manhood was in his perfectly active, free receptivity. His subordination was no inferiority.

His obedience was his divinest achievement. His obedience was his divinest achievement. And out of that obedience grew his vast, creative, commanding effect upon the world.

His kingly rule is the upper side of his filial sacrifice as a son, of the obedience which put him by man's side while he was on God's. Something about his humanity, his relations to a holy God, his manhood, consists in the moral reality of his experience, his conflict and his growth. It means his true ethical personality growing in an actual historic situation.

I don't know about you guys, but I love this. That there's a real context for the life of Jesus. That was not a glass house, what do they call it, a greenhouse, an ivory tower situation.

It was grim, it was real, it was authentic, it was actual. He was born into a certain place and time of a historic situation in which he had to live and work out his being and his destiny. So also are we.

We're the call to the last days. We have a context that's historic and real and in it we work out our salvation with fear and trembling as also did he. It means that his true ethical personality grew out of an actual historic situation.

It means that he counted in the public of his age. It wasn't just an idle laboratory for his perfection. He made an effect.

He was present. He counted. There was a consequence for his being there.

We need to ask is there a consequence for our being there? Are we having an effect? Is something happening because we are in this historic context? Are we making our right felt? Do we have something to say? Is our presence commanding? Does it make the world to sit up and take notice? Are we writing letters to the editor as I did when the Star Wars thing came out and they had six, seven feet tall cardboard cutouts of these ridiculous otherworldly creatures and they hung them in the supermarket. You couldn't go in and buy a loaf of bread or a can of tuna fish without having to see these hanging effigies of extra-terrestrial creatures and when the Star Wars film came out the kids were in their sleeping bags outside the door of the theater all night long to be the first one in and I wrote a letter to the editor which was a letter to the public. Scandalous! Are your kids outside the doors of their church waiting for it to open? Who are these companies that sell the rights to use their images from their films to the Pepsi Cola company and hang these effigies in stores that you're compelled to brush them by? It's an intrusion into our life and into our privacy that we haven't asked for but that commerce compels.

And I'm raising a voice of complaint and dissent. I refuse to have my life ordered by the Pepsi Cola company because they paid two and a half billion dollars for the rights of Star Wars. I mean, who read that and what difference did it make? But if I had not written it, it would have made a difference to me.

I would have forfeited a moral occasion that required a response from a Christian man who was in a place of leadership into the society in which I've been plunged whether it's heard or not. That's what Forsyth is saying here. He really inhabited its spiritual milieu, the public of his age.

He filled a mighty place in the social situation of his land and time. What a statement that is for the church. Are we fulfilling as the church a mighty place in the social situation of our land and time? And in fact, in previous generations, the church did exactly that.

Anything that's called women's rights and even the elevation of women to any kind of dignity would not be had it not been for the history of the church in the world. Women would be what's the word? Baggage. They would be accessories to the lust and whims of men as they are everywhere in the world that is non-Christian.

But in the Christian world, they have a dignity and a recognition as persons that only comes by virtue of the gospel and the presence of the church in the world that demands it. What's the message in Africa? You have an obligation, church, to stand for what is made in God's image. Just driving through the streets of the capital city there without traffic lights means that when you come to an intersection every vehicle and motor scooter and motorcycle gushing clouds of smoke are edging for a position to come and get through to their place where they make a right or left and so you have to take in gallons of fumes because for the want of a stinking traffic light and order I said, church that's an indignity to what is made in God's image.

You need to go to the legislatures and say we represent a Christian committee of moral concern and we demand the most elementary provision that pertains to the dignity of men like traffic lights. We insist, we have an obligation to stand for what is made in God's image and once the legislature who's this? Because they come with authority from heaven making a requirement on earth and when they begin to give them traffic lights and bring elementary order, the principalities and powers of the air suffer an enormous defeat and setback because they thrive on chaos and confusion and the degradation of men rather than their dignity. Got the idea? It's a struggle in a country where if a journalist dares make any criticism of these fat calves that are feeding their fortunes by running the country they're in a fraternity of glut.

You ought to see their homes. Here and there they're little castles with barbed wire rooftops and armed guards to preserve their little privacy and their advantageous lifestyles while the poor slob down on earth drink gallons of fumes day in and day out without any concern on the part of those in power. That ought not to be and I said to the church you cannot be moral without being political and you cannot be political without causing a ruffle be prepared for prison be prepared for opposition if you begin to assert the issue of God with men in your nation, in your continent.

That was the message and made men fear to hear it and a man one of the leading pastors in our community in whose church I gave that message he said later every word you spoke on was a fire in my heart. I burned internally with every word that you spoke. It was from the throne of heaven and I received it as a personal mandate.

Whatever the consequence of the cost, I am now under obligation because that word has come. Because that word was a work to walk in before the foundations of the earth were laid but it had to be spoken out of a freedom of obedience to the God who gave it. By a white man, why are they under obligation to hear him and because others have come to teach them about church growth and so on and all of the racial tensions of former colonial history that makes them dubious about anything that comes from a white man so that what they hear has got to come from a man beyond the issue of race and nationality because he's not coming from America he's coming from the throne of heaven he's a sent one with a sent word that means that we ourselves have got to rise above our own culture, our own civilization our own ethnic and racial origin.

We can't come as middle class whites to the Africas of this world we have to come as the messengers from heaven who are transcendent and above the conditions of our own nation and culture How do you do that? You're separated That's what God was waiting for in Acts 13 Separate unto me Paul and Barnabas from work to which I've called them Separate unto me separated men who are separated from the fact that they're Jews and have no vested interest even in their own ethnic identity nor will they employ it nor will they seek to be recognized nor will they intimidate Gentiles by coming as Jews they come as transcendent sons, sent and therefore the Gentiles can receive them and their message and when they're told later that they will see their face no more, they hang on the neck of that Jewish man and weep Jesus was sent but he was not a man under compulsion and obligation because the father required it he chose to be sent it's an act of the father and the son in complete freedom and love if Jesus was just under obligation the glory of what is represented in his coming to the earth and his suffering would have been lost he was the man of freedom he grew in stature and grace through free voluntary obedience both in being sent and in acting out all that was needed and we ourselves issue by issue moral issue by moral issue face the responsibility of freedom and obedience and that's how we grow in sense so when we're faced for example with the discipline that the church needs or to allow that malefactor to continue or someone in sin of whom we we're conscious to remain, something is going to corrupt the entire body when I lived in St.

Cloud maybe I should even mention the place because it happens everywhere, one of the young studs of the congregation fornicated with one of the young girls he was a charmer and became known to the pastor and the way it was dealt with, he was sent off to California and the girl was patted on the back and made nice and the church went on it wasn't long before the pastor's own wife own daughter became pregnant out of wedlock and I said to him and we've never been friends as much since when I said to him your daughter's pregnancy was the result of your failure to identify that moral issue and deal with it publicly before the entire congregation you swept it under the carpet but it emerged for the fall of your own daughter why do men sweep it? why don't they identify it? because it's

difficult to deal with moral questions and we'd rather look the other way, so we did not exercise our freedom our responsibility by which we would have grown in grace as Jesus did, by never forfeiting an occasion that came to him to act freely and responsibly in behalf of the father in righteousness that's how sons are formed saints it's not a formula it's not an automatic thing, it's a process of growth it's fearful but there's a grace that God gives for righteousness that we can say in Africa righteousness exalts a nation you want to prosper? don't look for loans from the UN or relief organizations start practicing righteousness and God will exalt that because exalt means to prosper it's not dependent on your raw materials or your manpower or their skills it's dependent on your faith

because Africa is shot through with unrighteousness with bribery, with corruption with every violation the most elementary things that we in the West take for granted as being reasonable and right so to insist on righteousness in an environment like that is to run across the whole grain of a dark continent, but God says to honor it okay, the cross is ever before us and it's a principle of growth and reality if we submit to it there's a suffering, but there's a glory and that glory is growth as sons which is not automatic and will not take place under hothouse conditions but takes place under the grit and the reality of the situations in which God has placed us in this world in this community, in this locality it raises the question of what was the environment in the church itself that was

conducive to this young man taking that liberty how much of it is the issue of the church itself rather than just the act and how much are we responsible for that atmosphere that was condescending and even encouraged lust there's such a thing as spiritual lust the desire for experience the enjoyment of experience for which we'll run to Toronto or who knows where, if we can get it and how great a difference is it between a lust for experience spiritually and a lust for experience sexually so we need to really get to the root of the problem we have a moral obligation and the church has a moral obligation to raise the issue of the history of the nations in which it exists why has the nation suffered so and so why is it suffering now where are we failing God and bringing a consequence an

indifference to him that we are interpreting as economic failure or social failure but the root of the problem is spiritual failure if the church doesn't raise those questions and press them, how can we expect the nations themselves to do it out of their secular mindsets so we're not living in our time and in our history as Jesus was we're not making our way felt so a church is more than services so he lived a true man's life in his identity with humanity in his own voluntary act of self-identification with it going down into the Jordan and identifying with the sins of Israel was his first act that pleased the father though he had no need to be baptized his identity with man lay in no mere continuity of substance nor even in participating in personality but in his assumption of man's

conditions of personality and in his renunciation of God's he made a willful choice to identify with man how humiliating for God but because he did we have salvation it lay in his active acceptance of the human and

sin laden conditions of communion with God in such victorious and sinless way as to make that communion possible and real for every other personal soul mamma mia what are you saying Forsyth much learning hath made thee mad what are you saying that because he voluntarily took this identification with humanity and worked out the issue of his own ultimate identity and vocation in the grit and the reality of the kinds of things that we face through communion with the father that we have now a key and a door to the same communion because he forsook ideal conditions and took the

reality of the conditions of life we in the reality of our condition of life can have the same quality of communion as he and he did it for that purpose he didn't need to he could have had a lofty ethereal and ideal relationship with the father if he had chosen to exempt himself from the conditions that pertain to being a man but because he accepted those conditions and embraced them in full in all their indignity and suffering we have a key to the father we have a key to devotion I like the way he says it he made that communion possible and real for every other personal soul that what Jesus toughed out in the early morning hours while it was yet dark in the condition of exhaustion where he needed his sleep is an encouragement for me to get out of bed at an early hour and do the same and

I don't think that his was more gratifying in his experience than mine I don't think the father immediately enveloped him in such an aura of felt reality he may have just let the son by faith tough it out without any sense of the father's presence to see if that devotion would continue as a true son that doesn't have to be paid back in felt experience and because he toughed that out we then have a key and a door for our own relationship and devotion he went through everything in the whole gamut of humanity in the context of the reality like unto our own and whatever he felt experience was in its substance and its constituent elements though 2000 years earlier and in a middle eastern environment exactly the same of every issue that we face in its moral essence and constitution therefore

here's the pattern this is devotion this is sacrifice, this is love that's why Paul can say who can separate this from the love of God how does he know it? because he's fathoming the extent to which that love was expressed that was voluntary and free not just at the cross but in every moral act that culminated in the cross and was in its essence the cross reiterated that's love that's God and our God and the grace that was extended in that relationship by faith is the grace of the Holy Cross how much more will he give us all things by that one whom he allowed to die for us Paul God and Christ is the maker of his own revelation it was God himself that came to us in Christ it was nothing about God even about his eternal essence or his excellent glory it is God that is our salvation not the

truth about God what Christ came to do was not to convince us even that God is love but to be with us and in us as the loving God forever and ever he came not to preach the living God but to be our God our life what he came to do was not to convince us even that God is love but to be with us and in us as the loving God forever and ever because we're joined with him in death and resurrection that's what we can say for us to live as Christ in him we live and move and have our being this isn't a God who went back to heaven and to enjoy then what he left behind forever but he's accessible and available and in us that we might live through him that he's continuing his same diminution his same reduction of incarnation that he experienced in his own earthly body by being now the same in our

earthly body have you thought of that he's still incarnate he's willing yet to continue to be limited and confined in our bodies to be the life of our life not just to give us an example but to continue to be that reality that we might live in and move and have our being in him this is provision that is spectacular that's why we can go to Africa and anywhere and be instant in season and out because the one whom we have

in us is inexhaustible the living God in his resurrection reality and in his enthronement now the source of our own life and being because he's willing yet to be incarnate and that leave us just a set of principles to hope to emulate but the very life itself crowned and enthroned has come down from heaven and is in us to will and to do of his good pleasure but is he having

opportunity through our freedom of will to allow him for that expression because it's easy to grieve the Holy One of Israel and to deny him the full possession of the vessel that he occupies or to allow it to become so defiled by its own sin and excess that he himself is curtailed or required to withdraw so we have to keep our vessels clean therefore the blood therefore confession therefore the acknowledgement of the truth of our condition that he would have a vessel appropriate to his holiness to occupy everyday when you commence in prayer what do you pray? what do I pray?

Lord, a fresh washing of the blood because my iniquity is ever before me there's something out of my base humanity and even the volume of words that I'm required to speak contain in themselves the principle of sin my iniquity is ever before me I'm not waiting for some large blatant occurrence to be persuaded I'm a man and my thoughts, my reveries are left to myself as contrary to your holiness right from the first breath of the day wash me in your blood purge me within and without make me chaste and renew your covenantal place in my being through the eating and drinking again of your body and blood to be the life of my life in this day the speaking of my speaking the reality of my reality the hope of my hope, the love of my love the righteousness of my righteousness this is the faith and

very few are conscious of it and are in agreement with it in the great mystery of incarnation and that's why this was our concluding subject that we should leave with this confidence, Christ in me the hope of glory what am I moaning and lamenting about and crying out in despair greater is he who is within you but be conscious of that life and live out from it given the first priority not your humanity not your experience and what you know and skill but him speaking to do of his good pleasure it's faith and it's fearful it's full of trembling but it's full of glory so what's Forsyth's conclusion we cannot see for the glory of that light and what we do see is yet beyond a man to utter still I trust we have felt some of the depth of that glory with which unveiled faces we shall one day

behold and rejoice in it and shall be made like it let us as we descend and go down into the valley with a secret which we cannot perhaps expound but which we cherish and smile to each other like silent lovers in a crowd and thus in a true church of faith adepts overcome the world let us go down to know that there is nothing in all the raging valley neither the devilry of the world nor the impotence of the church that can destroy our confidence, quench our power or derange our peace let us go down to know that the meanest or the most terrible things of the life now move beneath the eternal mastery and triumphant composure of an almighty savior and a final salvation which is assured in heavenly places in Christ Jesus our Lord and now may we be so emptied may he who so emptied himself that

he was filled with all the fullness of God dwell fully in us may he raise, rule and perfect us in all holiness to the end that bowing before him with every knee both in heaven and upon earth and evermore calling him holy, holy, holy Lord, we may be in him to the praise and glory of the father's grace who made us acceptable in the eternal son world without end, Amen Amen the glory of incarnation in its final expression is the many sons brought to glory and as that corporate son who even raises the dead by the faith to believe for Israel's restoration and the desire to see it even though it threatens its own choice and unique relationship with the father to see that nation raised again because the father's love and glory is enough both for the church and for the nation and we desire to see

him glorified by their restoration and we'll be the instrument by which it's obtained in authority and we will inhabit heavenly places and some of us will rule over five cities and some over ten in exact proportion to the obedience and authority to which we came in our earthly tenure.

We did not shrink from any decision and issue and we met it by the grace of God and therefore we can grow into the place of union and authority with him in his eternal rule as angels ascending and descending upon the son of God that's why Paul was outraged when he found two believers going to the court of the world to resolve a difference between them. What are you guys doing? It would be better for you to suffer being defrauded then you should go to the world's court to a difference between you.

Go to the least of and the youngest and the most infantile of the believers and let them decide don't you know he said you're going to rule over nations? Don't you know you're going to rule over angels? You're called to rule and if you'll not attain the maturity for the issues of your own present life how then will you operate in it eternally? This is the church. This is life. This is reality.

This is the environment for growth that we will carry with us into eternity to the degree that we have obtained it by faith and obedience through love and the power of his life here in Jesus name. So Lord, thank you for such a destiny. Thank you for such a call.

Thank you that you've gone before us to prepare and to make a way that you've not left us orphans that we have to scratch at this and play at it by principles or reduce it to a formula. Thank you that there's a tested life which we have received my God with our so great salvation and out of which we can live out these realities in the historic context to which you have brought us as sons and daughters in this world. So come my God and have the full glory, the full realization of this mystery in and through the church.

Thank you Lord. Thank you my God. We bless you.

Grow us up my God through responsibility, through freedom. Thank you Lord. May we see every issue as a moral issue not just an issue of expediency or convenience or getting rid of this problem or that but facing it in the context of God and his righteousness and doing what is pleasing in thy sight however it affects us.

So we bless you Lord. Thank you for this life and its reality and there's not any accident about our circumstance and we have every prospect to grow in that very circumstance as Jesus did in his. To grow and increase in knowledge and stature and knowledge of God and of the love of God as did he.

Thank you Lord.

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