

True Apostolicity - Part 4

by Art Katz

Art Katz explores the essence of apostolicity through Paul's farewell address, emphasizing selflessness, service to God, and the necessity of repentance before faith.

Duration: 56:18

Scripture: Acts 20:16-20, Acts 20:24, Acts 20:34-35

Topics: "Apostolic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the life and ministry of the apostle Paul. He highlights Paul's humility, transparency, and simplicity in his approach to ministry. The speaker emphasizes that Paul consistently demonstrated these qualities throughout his life, regardless of the circumstances he faced. The sermon also emphasizes the intense and heartfelt nature of apostolic ministry, encouraging ministers to be vulnerable and deeply connected to those they serve.

Transcript

Both my Bibles, and I'm tossed betwixt and between the King James and the New American Standard, there are desirable things in both renderings of the same chapter. The chapter is Acts 20. It's Paul's farewell address.

And I don't think that he himself was conscious that as he just summoned the elders of Ephesus to make his farewell, that he was aware of what an eternal statement he was giving. The statement is classic. It doesn't mean because it's something ancient.

It means because it's central, intrinsic to everything that shall ever be understood in the definition of the word apostolic. How many people here desire to be an apostolic people? I won't ask for the number of hands who can define what the word means. As I've said before, I'd much rather see you salivate over it than be able to clinically define it.

I don't know that it's definable. It's too living. It's too palpating.

It's an ultimate word. It's an ultimate statement for an ultimate church. Built on the foundation of ultimate men.

The church built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Jesus Christ himself, the apostles and the prophets themselves.

Not just what they preach, not just what they teach, not just what they're able to minister, but what they themselves are, the totality of these men, this awesome phenomenon, an apostolic man. You know what God wants at the end of the age? A church like that. And so I think there are certain wonderful things as a summation for these days in this theme that can be found in this 20th chapter.

It's almost criminal just to plunge in at any particular verse, but because our time is limited, maybe the 16th verse, For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia. For he hastened, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. And from the latest he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church.

And when they were come to him, he said unto them, You know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy in the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

And now behold, I know that you all among whom I have gone, preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Amen.

Well, Paul was in a rush to get to Jerusalem. I know that that's contrary to some of the counsel that we've been hearing in these days, not to haste, but I think that we'll find in the course of our experience there are occasions that require it. In fact, if there's anything that I especially appreciate about Paul, it's the continual redemption of the time.

In this regard, he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He never let a moment go to waste. He never left anything undone that could be performed.

There always seems to be such a voluminous sense of activity of the most significant and eternal kind that flows from his life like a gushing fountain. He wanted to say goodbye to these dear men, the elders of Ephesus, but he could not allow himself the time to stop. So calling to them from Miletus, he sent them a message that they should come to him.

And to our utter amazement, we read, And from Miletus, he sent through Ephesus and called the elders of the church, and when they will come to him. No ifs, no ands, no buts. No letters back to ask, well, what do you have in mind? What is so important that it demands our coming to you? I checked on the map, and the distance between Ephesus and Miletus is no miserly thing.

It's quite a substantial journey at a time when men did not have cars with automatic shifts and air conditioning and all the rest of these things. It was a wearisome journey, it was a dangerous journey, and yet it says, and when they will come. No ifs, no buts, no hows, no maybes.

He called, they came. I don't know about you, but my spirit leaps in anticipation of the day when God shall raise up men of such stature that when they call, we come. No ifs, no ands, no buts.

They recognized the authority that Paul so evidently had and raised not a single question. No matter what the difficulty or the inconvenience, they came. This is not something that can be organized.

This is something organic. This is something that operates by an anointing of God, an unction, and an authority that is demonstrable to men for which no question need be asked. And it's the heart and the genius of that which is apostolic.

What shall he say to them now that they have arrived? Is it going to be a little tear-jerky, sentimental bash? Paul, in his beautiful unselfconsciousness, in his mindlessness about himself, in summing up and reminding them of the things that they had observed together over those years, gives us a superlative statement of what apostolic ministry and what an apostolic man is. When they will come to him, he said, You know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. That's a remarkable statement.

From the first day to the last, you know what manner of man I have been with you in all seasons, in the good weather and the bad, in the times peaceful and the times tumultuous, under conditions of strain and stress and under conditions that were joyous, I have been one consistent thing from the beginning till the end. That's an awesome thing that needs to be understood. Because this is far beyond any man's ability.

It's not because he had a certain sanguine temperament that he was that consistent. The consistency is the statement of the life by which he lived. From the beginning, from the Alpha to the Omega, from the beginning to the end, he was one consistent thing in God because he lived from one consistent life.

Namely not his own, but another. He was eminently the resurrection man who could say with complete confidence and not as some kind of diatribe or cliché, for me to live is Christ. And both the power, the variety of his abilities, the astounding thing that Paul was in all of his manifold brilliance is a testimony to the fact that that was true.

He was consistent from the beginning to the last. One man of man in all seasons is a statement to the glory of the Christ who was his life. One day God is going to have a church equally as consistent.

It shall not rise and fall with its fortunes. It shall not be a group of fair weather sailors who can shout their amen and hallelujahs when they are well fed and abounding in prosperity. But whatever their condition, whatever their season, they are consistently one thing because their life is drawn consistently from one person, namely the resurrected Lord.

If the apostolic church is anything, it is eminently a resurrection phenomenon. The New American phrases that yet in another way and even in that phrasing there is a significant thing to be observed. When they had come to him, he said to them, And you yourselves know from the first day that I set foot in Asia how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews.

Here is what I want to draw to your attention. I was with you serving the Lord. I don't know if that tickles you, it delights me.

I was with you at all times serving the Lord. Notice the difference between serving men or as against serving God. I was with you but my service was unto God.

And that is an apostolic distinctive. Got that? I was with you but I was serving the Lord. And I'll tell you that there is no service that more redounds to the benefit of men than that which is a conscious serving of the Lord.

That's why he can say in the same scriptures, I did not withhold from you any good thing. Your faces never intimidated me. I didn't just speak to things that were pleasing and that you liked, that spoke of the copious benefits that come from believing.

I also spoke to you of the hardships, the cross, the suffering. I gave you the total counsel of God. I withheld from you nothing because he was this kind of a minister.

But as I was with you, I was serving the Lord. May we be such also. How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable.

I don't know who we have here that are elders and leaders or men who will one day be. But there's always a tendency to shrink and to withhold. Fearful lest if we bring that we're going to alienate men, going to offend men, going to lose the esteem of men which we so much prize and cherish.

To serve the Lord, to be with men and yet to serve the Lord is not some kind of blithe waving of the hand. It's an ultimate testimony of what an apostolic man and apostolic ministry is. Requires a selflessness and an utter devotion and consecration to God.

That even when men will be pained by your obedience to him, yet you will not withhold any good thing or shrink from declaring anything that was profitable. It's interesting that many of these things that are profitable are not always immediately recognized as such. Maybe later the profitableness of it will be revealed.

I like what someone has used as a definition for truth. Truth, this person said, is first painful before it becomes glorious. Men will not always recognize the gloriousness of truth, but they will be immediately affected by its pain.

But he did not shrink or withhold any profitable thing. Serving the Lord with all humility, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I'll tell you that every statement he makes is so charged with meaning, with understanding.

How many of us have yet understood, however long we have been in the Lord, that repentance toward God must precede faith in Jesus Christ? That faith in Jesus is not some kind of intellectual process. And many of us are confronting men from the wrong angle, trying to bring them to a place of belief, who have not yet come to a place of repentance toward God. And I'm especially taken with this, knowing what kind of confrontation my Jewish people need.

There's no need for them to consider Jesus as Savior until they have first recognized the necessity for a repentance toward God, even as they themselves narrowly understand Him. For their chronic and historic resistance and rejection of that God, before they can consider and receive the grace which is a faith given of God in Jesus Christ. Paul had the right order.

Repentance toward God precedes faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is a function of repenting, and not a function of intellectualizing. This is a tremendous summary, coming from a chief of the apostles, and it deserves our uttermost attention.

And now behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. I have a precious intuition that being bound in the Spirit was not something that Paul was now going to face in this last leg of the journey that was to culminate in his beheading in Rome, but that his entire life was summed up in the phrase, being bound in the Spirit, I go on my way to Jerusalem. This is an apostolic description.

For every person, man or woman, who takes to themselves this chief name, apostolic, must eminently be one who is bound in the Spirit on their way to Jerusalem. Are you bound in the Spirit? Do you know what that means? To be restricted and hemmed in by God? Your own desires overruled, or not even so much as considered? That the only way to attain to the Jerusalem of God is to go only in this manner and in no other. Bound in the Spirit, I go.

Not just in the final episode of his life, but in all of the episodes of his life, because you know how his life in God began? By the raising of a tremendous question, which many of us have not yet come to ask. Lord, what would you have for me to do? Paul asked this at the inception of the light that broke upon his life on the road to Damascus, and he received an answer. Tell him what things he must suffer for my name's sake.

From the moment that the light broke, this dear Jewish man knew that his life was not his own, that he was to be bound in the Spirit, that he was not to seek the places to which he would go, or the things that he would speak upon arriving, that nothing was to be predicated on the basis of his own choice, but that one who broke upon him in overwhelming light on the road to Damascus. Lord, he said with trembling and astonishment, what would you have for me to do? And he thereafter lived the totality of his life in the Spirit of that question. How many of us who raised our hands to desire to be apostolic have not yet had the full courage to ask the same God that question with trembling and astonishment? Lest we receive an answer that is disconcerting, unpleasant, or inconvenient.

Lord, what would you have for me to do? I'm continually amazed at the numbers of Christians who have made their own choice about career, about future, about the choice of university or college or training or preparation or ministry or where they're going to go or where they're going to live or how they're going to spend their vacations and not once have thought to submit the question to God. This is an apostolic foundation. And the answer, however it comes in whatever form, you can be assured is this.

You're going to be bound in the Spirit. We are all, if we are apostolic, bound for the same destination, the new Jerusalem of God. And there's only one way to attain it.

It's to go, bound in the Spirit, not knowing what awaits me there. I'll tell you, for a Jewish guy like myself who has always prided myself in knowing, who has been trained by the world not to take a step without an understanding and a knowledge of where I'm going and what the consequence is, this is a total contradiction of all that the world celebrates as wisdom and sweet reasonableness. And that's what I want to say about that which is apostolic.

It completely contradicts the world in every point in particular in that which it esteems as wise and right. How would you like to go, bound, not knowing? I'll tell you, it strikes at the heart of our deepest insecurities. And to be apostolic is not for men who are riddled with insecurity.

It is men who are sublimely confident that they are accepted in the Beloved. Who do not need to be shored up, they don't need to be assured, they don't need to have fleshly human confidences of what shall await them there. They can go bound now, not knowing.

That's how we came to this place. Not knowing. That's how we came to community.

Not knowing. But we came because we were bound in the Spirit and had no alternative. I want to say that it was not a grim business where we bit our lips and pursed our mouths and grit our teeth and wrung our fingers at the unhappy lament that somehow our lives were not our own.

There was somehow a joy in being obedient to a God who is not required to give us explanation. Nor did we ever ask it. How would you like to have put your foot over the chain that was at the top of this road about seven years ago when this property was bankrupt and for sale and to have the foot come down on the other side and for the Lord to give you the name Dominion and to breathe into your spirit that this is going to be an end-time teaching center and a nucleus for apostolic purposes of God and community of God and that you are to go ahead.

And you hardly understand what the word community means. You have only the faintest intimation of what end-time teaching means. But you go ahead.

Against the opposition of them. Against their very sage counsel. Now cats, what do you want to do way out there? Your call to your Jewish people and your home presently is only 20 miles from New York City with two and a half million Jews.

And you're going to go up in the boondocks and play cowboys and Indians? Explain that, I ask you. And you cannot. Do you know why? Because God has not explained it to you.

You are bound in the spirit and you go not knowing. If you have no stomach for that kind of life if that shatters your security if you'd have to have some kind of confidences and guarantees of what your going means or you're not taking a step you're disqualified from apostolic consideration. I'll tell you there's a precious joy and a wonderful peace in going not knowing.

I only have to know him who knows. I don't have to know the particulars. Paul went bound in the spirit not just in the final episode of his life but all the episodes of his life.

And so must the church be that is founded on such men as that who can move in God not knowing. Somehow they have a sublime inward confidence that does not require explanation for they know the God who summons them. Not knowing what will happen to me there except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city saying that bonds and affliction awaits me.

That's true for us too. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself. How can you read through that hurriedly? But I do not consider my life dear to myself.

I love the King James rendering but none of these things move me neither count I my life dear unto myself. Well if you don't count your life dear unto yourself for whom else then is it dear? If it's not dear for you for

whom then is it dear? For another. Have you made this counting? Have you made this reckoning, this calculation? It's foundational.

You want to know what the foundation is of the apostles and prophets? It's this. I do not reckon, I do not count my life as dear to myself. It's not to be lived for my purposes but for another so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus.

I don't know that God's going to give us an apostolic ministry until he first sees a heart that has come to this foundation I count not my life as dear unto myself. Listen guys, you know what the cancer is of modern Christianity if I haven't told you now several times? It's a terrible, inveterate, basic, interwoven self-centeredness that has merely moved from worldly and material and carnal things even into the realm of religious and spiritual things but still has the believer at the center. The benefits that accrue to him the delight that he has the enjoyment he has I'm not being fed and that's the justification for leaving and seeking yet another place because your feeding, your delight, your enjoyment, your satisfaction is the whole fulcrum upon which every question is decided.

It's cancerous, it's filthy, it's despicable it's egotistic and self-centered no matter how spiritually it clothes itself. There's only one foundational apostolic position I count not my life dear unto myself it's not for me it's dear for another to whom I have given it in the day that his light broke upon my soul. Have you come to that? There will not be an apostolic church worthy of that word until there's a people who have come to this foundational reckoning I count not my life dear unto myself.

I'll tell you the Lord is saving us from being a merely phraseological people who are glib in such speakings and what he does is he provides you with a 1950 airplane and puts you, I don't know what, 8, 9, 10,000 feet up in a blizzard somewhere between Chicago and Indiana where your plane is bobbing like a cork where John was with me in Hawaii when in almost hurricane conditions we were again in another private plane bobbing like, I don't know what, sick wondering if we were going to reach our destination being flown by a man whose plane had crashed some earlier time and he lost his wife in that crash passing over vast bodies of water wondering if you'll reach your destination it's a wonderful time to reckon whether you're counting your life as dear unto yourself that's why this poor could stand before Jews and stand before Greeks that's why he could not be moved that's why his tremendous courage astounds us in his boldness because he had come to a foundational reckoning to which many of us have not come who have made many trips to the altars, teary-eyed and yet count our life as dear unto ourselves as if it's ours to seek for its fulfillment and have not given it over to another to whom it really belongs in order that I might finish my course in the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus and you'll come to that you'll receive your true ministry in the Lord Jesus to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God none of these words are accidental none of these are haphazard phrasings for Paul it was the gospel of the grace of God can you testify personally of the gospel of the grace of God?

I think it's something that's reserved for the wretched amazing grace that saved a wretch like me Paul was a wretch in all of his blindness in all of his Jewish superiority in all of his Pharisaical misunderstanding in all of his religious expertise that when the light broke and God revealed him to be the murderer that he was he saw himself in such utter wretchedness and recognized and received the gospel of the grace of God to which he thereafter solemnly testified how well do you know that grace? not just in the initiation of your salvation but in all of your continuation with God to what measure do you know his grace? how much do you trust him for his grace? how much will you extend yourself? how much will you put aside the securities and the worldly and earthly things that shore you

up and allow yourself to be stripped and even voluntarily give it away that you shall be solely and purely the recipient of his grace I'm sorry if I have to use illustrations out of my own experience but what has happened in the course of our six years here has been that stripping coming to the situation with a salary with an organization of which I was director and one by one watching the things stripped away which every man takes as his right who is evangelically secure in the ministry which he has life insurance policies medical insurance policies every kind of thing to hedge his life about with security one of my colleagues whom I knew in those early years when we first began here said, Artie said well if you want to put all of that property across the road in the name of Ben Israel

be the fool and do it but please take my recommendation at least the plot where your own house is put that in your own name personally because who's to say what's going to happen to Ben Israel Ministries it may one day collapse, fall, stagger people leave, things change but at least have the security of knowing that your house is in your name but I could not we rise and fall with what God is with the grace that God is going to meet out to the band of souls with whom we are joined and if we lose the property we all lose and then the Lord subsequently as we went on fingered everything else the salary went, the life insurance and the medical insurance even though my daughter has just come from an operation in Rochester that will likely run for thousands of dollars which if we had only kept

the life insurance the medical insurance policy we would not now have to face the painful question of how is this expense going to be met but I'll tell you that I have no pain over it because I can testify solemnly to the grace of God I think God is going to empty us of our securities I think God is going to make our life more precarious I think he's going to invite us to extend ourselves and to empty out our wallets and to put away the things that will establish our security that we might also be able in our own generation to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God do you have a knowledge of that grace? it doesn't come without some measure of trembling but when it comes what a privilege to testify of a God of all grace and now behold I know that you all among whom I went about

preaching the kingdom will see my face no more therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men well I guess we have to make just a little allowance for Paul however impeccable and blameless he is here's one thing that you can fault him for he's a bit maudlin he takes himself a little too seriously he has a little tendency for exaggeration I'm innocent of the blood of all men come on man what are you trying to suggest that your preaching is an issue of life or death that your ministry is life or death that somehow if you fail God in total obedience and give men something less than what God intends that the issue of life and death and eternity is involved what do you think you are anyway I'll tell you what I want to be accused of that kind of exaggeration in

fact I already stand before you as a man completely conscious that every time I open my mouth whether it's here at Dominion or overseas or any such place the issues of life and death are always being propounded and if you don't see it as that and you think it's some lesser or lighter thing do not think that you have a qualification for apostolic ministry I'm innocent of the blood of all men I'll tell you if we felt that our preaching and our ministries were to affect the life or death or eternal destiny of men we would approach the pulpit of God with far more reverence and much greater trembling than we now presently do and so ought we to do and so will we do drunk from nothing I have been bold and fearless because while I was with you my ministry was unto the Lord can you see why it is

that I'm so impatient with shysters and counterfeit apostles with little timsy cutesy guys who have a little apostolic vocabulary and think that they're doing the same thing and have not this stature can you see why

it's the man who is the foundation the church built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets what they are as men in their depth, in their stature in what is wrought in them in their whole view and vision of what they are and their purpose and the quality of their service and life is the very foundation of a church that is to be like them these are total men who are establishing and setting for us a standard of totality toward God and behold I know that you all among whom I went about preaching the kingdom will see my face no more have you preached the kingdom and

when the gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the earth, then shall the end come I don't know how much of a beginning we have actually yet even made I know there's been a lot of gospel things going on but which gospel gospel of narrow personal salvation and self interest and benefit that accrues by believing is not the gospel of the kingdom Paul had a profound and burning kingdom consciousness and I have a feeling that the gospel of the kingdom which he preached and proclaimed and demonstrated was a far more awesome inclusive, extensive, profound gospel than what we have understood in modern times that only serves the self interest of men men were called out of something by that gospel and into something of a society that had its origin in heaven and we need again to proclaim

the gospel of the kingdom you'll turn to the very last chapter of Acts, not now, at your own convenience the very last thing that is spoken of Paul is that all who came to him in the quarters which he had in Rome to them he spoke the things pertaining to the kingdom it's another subject I don't have the time now to speak of it but I want to say this I am struck by the absence of kingdom consciousness in God's people they think it only some kind of airy and ephemeral phrase that points to some kind of vagary after one leaves this life, they do not understand it as an apostle does of the kingdom as present possibility and reality here now, thy kingdom come in the earth as it is in heaven is the Lord's own prayer who is the high priest and the apostle of our confession, to the degree that

you do not believe for a kingdom now in the earth to that degree, you're disqualified from apostolic consideration oh I tell you the elements here are golden and the beauty of it is it's spilling out of this glorious overflowing fountain of life which is the apostle Paul, who had known conscious understanding that 2000 years later, some Jewish guy wet behind the ears, would be using his farewell address as a statement, as a classic expression of the quintessential elements of true apostolicity I tell you when you can pinch a man and get something like that out of him in which he's not even aware and conscious of the glories that are pouring out of him you have something apostolic for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God I wouldn't shrink from declaring it either

except that I don't really think that I know it okay brother, right on, you're close to the kingdom don't make any presumptions that you do, because the whole purpose of God is not to be obtained by the hearing of the tapes of other men however edifying that might be or the gathering up of a library or the scouring of your concordance the receiving of the whole purpose of God, the totality of the glory of all that that means is that which is given on the mount to the man whom God summons to come up and be here and I will give you the law that thou mayest teach it the knowledge of the whole purpose of God is not for amateurs it's not for presumptuous claimants it's for men whom God has called in God's own time to ascend the mount in the wilderness and to wait six days in the thick cloud to

be emptied of all that is human of all of your own vain notions however correct, if they are only correct humanly, they are not correct enough and when you are finally emptied out and summoned up on the seventh day to be in communion with him who alone can give the law, then you may receive the whole counsel of God that thou mayest teach it because that is an element of that which is apostolic men who

have such a full-orbed sense of the totality of God's purpose as it has been revealed to them in deepest communion upon the mount to which they have been summoned by God in God's own time and not before I ask you, is there anything more tinny and more of a clank than to see some young hotshot mouthing concepts to which he has not yet attained in his own experience have you had that

experience? or have you been such a hotshot? you know what I mean it has the ring of truth in a sense it is truth, it's technically true it's positionally true, it's scripturally true it's doctrinally true, but it's not yet true for that brother it has not been given him in awesome experience and in communion and in the dealings and trials of God he has only gleaned it from others and is pirating something and though it is technically true, it has no penetrating power it has no full power to convict and it falls off our ear like the proverbial water off the duck's back may God give us men who can give us the whole counsel of God who have received it from God on the mount to which they have been summoned in His own time I'll tell you what, I'm willing to wait for such men we might even

delay their coming because of our presumption that seeks to know things that the Lord has not yet Himself given so be on guard for yourselves and all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood I can just see Paul's sob as he spoke that line something caught in his throat which he purchased with his own blood word to God that it should catch in my throat that I have to just pause before I can go on because just the very conjuring up, reminding of ourselves again about the church of which He has made us overseers at the cost of His own blood causes us to pause and I'll tell you that if we don't pause and don't recognize the cost by which it has come we're not likely to be the overseers that we ought we'll

be presiding over some other cheapy kind of thing, some kinsley kind of thing, a matter of mere succession of services and programs and not the church which He purchased with His own blood this needs to be rubbed into our souls we need to understand this in the depths of our being if we're to be the apostolic overseers to which God calls us and I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock and from among yourselves men will arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them after my departure from among yourselves men will arise I'll tell you what that speaks to me when the apostolic thing goes the human thing comes after my departure men will arise will you be jealous over the thing which is apostolic over the thing which is

true over the thing which is apostolic and not allow it authentic not allow it to depart that men will arise will you be jealous not to cede and give ground to men which can only come apostolically do you have such a sense for that which is authentic that which is true that you'll not allow men to arise and give any kind of counterfeit or seeming thing which is not authentically given of God after my departure men will arise and indeed hasn't it been the whole history of the church since the decline of the apostolic generation with the fading out of the polls men have arisen systems have come organizations have been developed whole kinds of procedures and formalities and formalities and authorities men have arisen after my departure may we again have back the organic and palpitating

living thing that the church knew with such men as Paul and give over that which has come institutionally and organizationally that is structured and fixed and formal that has not this precious life and now I commend you Paul says in the 32nd verse to God and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified that's not a little curtsy, that's not a little cheeky statement I commend you to God and to the word of his grace which is able to keep you you wanna know something guys? however great the apostle Paul himself was he is not indispensable polls

can come and go praise God for them but the word of God is indispensable I commend you to God and to the word of his grace which is able to keep you do you have that

confidence in the word of his grace? do you know it in your experience that that word can keep and that's why Paul throughout his whole apostolic career confound fellowships and leave them and come back a year or two yet later to find them not only continuing but flourishing because he has commended them to the word of his grace may we have such a sublime reverence for that word such a confidence in that word that can not only keep others but can keep us too if I say to you tonight in conclusion as you leave dominion I commend you to God and to the word of his grace which can keep you will you trust it? will you hold fast to it? will you believe it? that is apostolic believing that is apostolic reverence for the word of God which can keep you and build you up and give you the inheritance

among all who are sanctified I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes art, does that have a place also in this apostolic definition?

I believe it does and I'm suspicious therefore of men who presume to be apostles who have glittering wardrobes, drive spanking cars, have fleets of planes or at least better vintage than what we have there's something inconsistent there's something contradictory with men who have gold and silver and clothes that somehow contradicts that which is apostolic I covet it no man's gold or silver or clothes not only did I not have it, I did not seek it it was not part of my desire I was impervious to my appearance, I mean I covet my nakedness, I clothe myself with respectability, but that's as far as it went, I did not covet it was not part of my mindset it had no place in my understanding it was not a part of the conditions of my life or existence and I think that that has to be true not only of apostles, but also of an apostolic church I'll never get out of my spirit the cry that came in St.

Paul I think, in an early full gospel meeting, I haven't been invited back when the Lord gave such a blistering word that night, well the men knew that something was up, because twice before the meeting they brought me downstairs to pray, such an anticipation that God was going to say something for which they trembled, they knew it was beyond what they had experienced conventionally in full gospel meetings, and it was and after the message that night, which I have completely now forgotten a prophecy came, which I have not forgotten, where God cried out, where is your comfort? and where shall you stand in the day of extremity you whose comfort is to be found in your closets and you'll find yourself in the streets, with the ground undulating under your feet and every kind of apocalyptic

condition breaking loose in great fear, where will your comfort be there, who now finds their comforts in their closets, in their TV set, in their possessions, in their things where is your comfort? an apostolic people need necessarily to be stripped not by force, not with groanings on our part, but willingly that we should come to such a place of detachment as this as not only to need or to covet silver, gold, clothing you yourselves know that these hands minister to my own needs and the men who are with me, in everything I showed you that by working hard in the manner in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus that he himself said it's more blessed to give than to receive in everything I showed you this morning as I spoke to the men I quoted from

another place where he said, imitate me and the Lord it's a remarkable audacity imitate me and the Lord because it speaks of one and the same thing in everything I showed you, I didn't just speak the things that were correct, in everything I showed you what a man what a demonstration, what a life what a foundation and when he had said these things he knelt down and prayed with them all the humility of the man not

waiting for someone else to initiate it, he knelt down before them all, the mindlessness the unselfconsciousness the uncomplicatedness of Paul the transparency, the simplicity he knelt down and they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul and repeatedly kissed him fell on Paul's neck it says in King James and grieving especially over the word which he had spoken that they should

see his face no more and they were accompanying him to the ship I tell you that there's a certain safety and security in keeping other believers at a distance and at arm's length in ministering to them impersonally of doing your thing and leaving and going on to your next assignment when you open yourself like this to men, where they fall upon your neck, where they embrace you with tears, where you make yourself vulnerable that when you leave them it wrenches the very heart out of your body you can know that your ministry has been apostolic and not just ministerial I'm only at the first phases of such a thing in our own experience and I cannot remove from my memory the band of saints that had seen us off at a train station in East Germany in the city of Schwerin as we stood up in the

train compartment and they were down on the platform below and the gusts of steam coming up and we had our face to the glass and they were looking up at us with that expression how can you describe it?

An expression that said, when shall we see you again?

What assurance do we have that we're going again to enjoy each other's fellowship that we're going to have the privilege of receiving precious and heavenly things of the kind that you've imparted now prior to your leaving and we're looking upon them with a longing and a knowledge that we might not see them who knows what's going to befall them in this no man's land between east and west as the train begins to chug and take on speed and pull out of the platform and your heart is wrenched right out of its body to see these precious faces are you willing to have your heart jerked like that? because the whole wisdom of things that are ministerial in our generation is don't get yourself too involved don't expose yourself, don't make yourself vulnerable keep a ministerial detachment baloney!

that which is apostolic is intense, it is heartfelt it goes down on the sand it cries out with men who fall on your neck and weep there's such a love, there's such an intensity of relationship that Paul never had to command, he never had to throw his weight around he never had to assert himself he had only to entreat he had only to suggest, he had only to persuade and men followed though he could have you exercise his authority though he could have commanded he did not true apostolicity I've written at the top of that page is personal intimate, relational true voluntary rather than authoritarian not formal, not organizational not prestigious, not positional not a man throwing his weight around because he has a title it's a man who reflects in such a remarkable degree the high priest and

the apostle of our confession that you love the Jesus who is his life in him you love the impeccability of his life, you love his blamelessness you love his example and his model you love the fact that he never withheld any good thing, that he never spared you, that he never took it easy and though sometimes you wince at the painful things that he had to say and do because his ministry was unto the Lord now that he is going to depart and you're not going to see his face anymore your heart is ready to burst are we willing to make ourselves open and vulnerable to such relationship as this? we have for the first, well it's the second time now that we have sent a couple from our fellowship to a foreign country one couple has come back but I think God has called them yet again to that same

country and now another dear couple, Paul and Adrian Volk very precious to me have been sent to England I can't tell you what that meant what a wrench, what a sense of pain to lose these precious

people to have a community council as we did the other day and for them not to be there to bring the kind of impartation that is characteristically theirs it's such a sense of loss and yet I know and I sense a hand writing on the wall that this is only the beginning of the kind of sacrifice that we must pay of God calling other couples other individuals who are going to have to be parted from us it's going to be such a wrench and such a tear on the heart are we willing to come into this apostolic lifestyle this intimacy of knowing by which when departing comes you can only fall on the neck and

weep grieving especially over the word that he had spoken that they should see his face no more and they were accompanying him to the ship are you ready to be bound in the spirit and to go not knowing have you determined and reckoned that your life is not your own that you do not count it dear unto yourself are you ready to give yourself in the total way that will produce such a total man and such a total people for God I was with you all the while ministering unto the Lord from the beginning you know what manner of man I was with you in all seasons all the more a glorious statement of an apostolic life because it is so unselfconscious because it is spoken so spontaneously because it's just such an impromptu summary of what has been the truth of this man's life with his people may it be

true also of us and if it shall be it shall not come to us at any lesser cost than it came to Paul have you asked a great question with which Paul's life began a question which never left him Lord what would you have for me to do have you decided the foundational apostolic question that you count not your life dear unto yourself and by definition what adheres in the word life is not just your own body your own person but that which is joined with you your wife, your children, your possessions your all, I count not my life dear to myself, my savings, my future my security, whatever it's for the glory of the Lord I think that God is waiting for such a yes from a people who have been satisfied in past times with giddy of fun and games satisfied with the verbalizing of these things and the

phraseologies and even systematizing and thinking to set up and to establish our own systems of submission of authority and have our own New Testament fellowship almost a kind of gamesmanship in the air of it the world is waiting for the glorious phenomenon of a true apostolic church built on the foundation of a true apostolic people who count not their lives dear unto themselves and are willing to be bound in the spirit to go to the Jerusalem of God not knowing so I just want to invite you are you still willing to raise your hand?

I want to be an apostolic person all people is there a juice forming in your mouth? something beginning to flow odd I would be pressed to define what that word means but I know that it suggests glory I know it's the ultimate biblical word I know it's everything that we're about I know that it's the very thing for which we are even right now in this moment circled about by a cloud of invisible witnesses of whom the world was not worthy who without us are not complete that we have the privilege of being in that continuum in that succession to take the baton to finish the apostolic race the ministry that the Lord has given to be innocent of the blood of all men to discharge it with such and utter ruthlessness before God independent of the praise or the applause of men that's where we stand

in this hour let's bow before the apostle and the high priest of our confession and to whom shall be glory in the church not just good services or good programs but glory because it shall be made up of a glorious people whose life is not dear to themselves who are bound in the spirit and are going not knowing they cannot explain the various dealings of God they cannot explain the things which are fingered and required and yet in it all we enjoy if you have not in this totality given God a yes and the whole yielding over of your life that it shall be dear for Him and not for yourself would you do it, no? would you end these days in a

significant way to a God who has spoken to us significantly would you reckon something once and for all that is total and unreserved I am willing to be bound

in the spirit I had thought to go here or to do this I had contemplated this college or this career I hadn't even so much as consulted you it seemed to me the conventional wisdom the right thing to do to prepare for the future but from this night forth I go bound in the spirit I count not my life dear unto myself I am willing to forsake my aspirations my intentions for the future I don't have to know I want to be an apostolic person I want to be fitted in to the apostolic purpose I want my life to count for the things that are eternal and glorious I want to be one whose ministry is unto the Lord and not before men one who will not shrink from any profitable thing I've been cowardly, I've been fearful I have needed the approval of men more than the approval of God but I want tonight to

come to such a decisive and new place in God that shall be hereafter the very foundation of the balance of my days I want to be apostolic right where you're sitting, just say that to the Lord in your own words I count not my life dear to myself have it, all that is in my life I take my hands off it's yours I'm willing to be vulnerable and open though it's going to wrench my heart I hate these painful pottings but I'm willing to make myself open to other men and other women that if we shall be required to pot I'll have to suffer the pain of ripping but I shall not withhold myself, I shall not play it safe, I shall not be conservative I shall not keep people at a distance, so I'll be safe from the pain of such pottings I'm fully abandoned, settle something with God that you might receive

your ministry

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