

Weakness and Foolishness

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of weakness and foolishness in the faith, and how it is the key to the revelation of God's glory.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:27

Topics: "The Power of God", "Weakness in Faith"

Description

Art Katz emphasizes that God delights in using what the world considers weak and foolish to reveal His glory, challenging the church to embrace its own failures and weaknesses rather than seeking outward success. He critiques the modern church's obsession with power and efficiency, arguing that true grace and revelation come from recognizing our human depravity and the need for God's intervention. Katz calls for a radical shift in how believers view their faith, advocating for a willingness to confront discomfort and vulnerability in order to experience the true work of God. He warns against the allure of charismatic success and encourages a return to the humility and foolishness exemplified by Christ. Ultimately, he asserts that only through acknowledging our weakness can we truly allow God's power to manifest in our lives.

Transcript

God delights in choosing the things that are weak and foolish in the eyes of the world to usher in the holy and glorious. He wants to rub this into our consciousness, and that the way of the kingdom is utterly contrary to the way of the world. I feel like declaring war on Charismatic and Pentecostal "Amens" and "Hallelujahs"--anything that presumes to know anything, and I just want to be utterly foolish and celebrate failure, confusion and everything that characterizes what I believe is the true work of God; for only the true work of God will compel the attention of the world.

I am suspicious of anything that is outwardly impressive, well-funded, runs smoothly, has an ambitious building program, or has programs producing shining examples of disciples. It seems to me to be not of God, but has rather the stink of man—precisely because it is too efficient. If something works too well, and has been accomplished without the suffering of the cross, we are likely out of the purposes of God. It is not until you are saved and come into the church that you really begin to learn and understand the dimensions of human depravity.

The revelation of what we really are as man truly begins at that point. That is why the church, the real church, is such a horror and a mess, full of confusion and contradiction, such an ugly revelation of the

condition of your and the rest of mankind's condition. If that has not been revealed in your church conduct, then where you are fellowshiping is not true church; it is something less that keeps the lid on, and allows you enough activity to give the semblance of services, the euphoria of meetings and songs, and a good preaching, but not sufficient to reveal what you are and what we all are together.

That is why grace is not yet upon us all, because it is reserved for the wretched and the sinner. Until we have come to recognize how wretched we are, how totally bankrupt and incapable we are of anything, and just how much we really live in the spirit of the world, then grace is not available to us. One of the reasons we show little fruit or virtue in our lives is that so little is required of us. To compound the problem, those who lead us are fearful to require anything of us.

I want to vote for more disturbance, for agitation, for confrontation--anything that will get us off our comfortable pews and chairs and the things that we establish for our religious satisfaction. We need to embrace the things that are inconvenient and contrary to our self-serving will and desire. Weakness and foolishness are therefore inherent in the faith; they are the key to the revelation of God's glory. We need to see the collapsing contradiction of our humanistic hopes in order to come to a true ground and true foundation by which God can be Lord of all.

A person is not yet in that place so long as there is human pride, assurance and learning in how to successfully conduct and perform religious service for God. The spirit of the world has unquestionably affected us. The whole emphasis today lies on power, ability, and the idea that we can "get the job done" as efficiently as the world³if not better. We take the world's techniques and use them for the kingdom of God, and we can be just as charming, just as musical and just as able, and by that build successful churches, movements and organizations.

Our world has become drunk with power: Electric power, atomic power, military power. People are looking for their salvation in power terms. You hear phrases like, "powerful" men of God, "powerful" preachers. How about "weak" preachers? We, as the church, have been seduced by the emphasis on a power-celebrating world. How many of us are actually ashamed and self-conscious about any form of weakness? We do not want to take the risk of foolishness. We always want to come out smelling like a rose and doing something expertly and well on the basis of our own ability, rather than to trust the life of the crucified and Risen One.

We here this scripture quoted: "Not by might nor by power but by My Spirit." Well, how about the Spirit of weakness? How about the Spirit of humiliation? How about the Spirit of failure? Our carnal souls are longing for the power of Pentecost and the glory of God that fell. We want to see the power! It sounds so spiritual, but how much of that is the celebration of man in our faulty motives? How much of that is really us wanting to exhibit ourselves clothed in that power, doing great things?

In contrast, Jesus stood before His accusers, the Lamb who went silently to the slaughter. He demonstrated to them the power of the cross by His silence, humiliation, suffering, weakness, and finally by death. There needs to be this power demonstrated by the church. It is the power of foolishness and weakness. It is the power of not succeeding on the basis of your own ability. It is the power of the willingness to be weak in order to allow His life to be expressed. It is the power that comes, not in conventional church circumstances, where we are not together long enough nor intensively enough to reveal and to show our weakness.

We need to be willing to come into that intensity, allowing the mask to come off, and to show us what our real, naked condition is—especially how hopeless it is without God. It is the willingness to be taken captive, to be restricted and to be constrained. So long as our own natural desires reside in spiritual things, then there is still that stink of man. We still have our own flavor, and that is the difference between a dead work and a living and fruitful one. The authentic thing comes out of the weakness of that which has been emptied and brought into captivity, and the "flashy" thing, which is really powerless, is the life that is still living for itself and still assertive.

Therefore, the one who allows himself to be overcome makes no demands, has no wall behind which he can defend himself. To be completely poured out is to be left defenseless. We remain foolish and utterly weak. It is this weakness in the inmost place that God is seeking after. I think of our own community fellowship, and the numbers of people who have fled over the years, because "this was wrong or that was wrong, or this condition was irritating, or this elder lacked that, or things were not functioning, and it was not a happy and prospering fellowship."

In my opinion, God never intended that our fellowship should be "happy" and "prospering" at that time; that it was the God-given opportunity to be rid of the stink of man and of self. The abrasive situation was the only condition that could have searched it out, but because we were so sure, and had such clever ideas about what fellowship should be, then in our irritation and dissatisfaction, and in seeing the more attractive things elsewhere, we fled. Every believer must experience the demanding relationship of intensive church life and fellowship together.

It is not an option, for no other provision will fit them for the conditions that we are going to be required to face in a soon-coming hour. Mere Sunday services will never reveal the truth of our condition. We will never be tested in conventional church situations to any depth, however nice we think we are. A man who has allowed himself to be overcome is one who will allow himself to be put into that kind of a situation where he is going to have to face his own stink and failure, along with the other believers who are joined with him.

He must have his humanistic and romantic ideas, even of what the faith is, shattered and destroyed until he just collapses in a heap. You cannot go on, but it is at that very point that the blessed hope has the opportunity to come. That is where life really begins. That is where God becomes God. That is where His grace becomes grace. That is where he begins to unfold His will and His way, and provide the energy in the very place where our own efforts failed to obtain. How many of us are willing to go down to that before we can come up?

Down to the human thing before we can rise up into a newness of life? In order to demonstrate a "kingdom come", there first needs to come a ruin, a scandalous failure, a collapse. Somehow one cannot leap over that necessity and still build the everlasting kingdom. Something must first fall away, and the church is that entity given of God to reveal what could never have been seen in the world. The world does not want things disturbed; it wants things smooth, efficient and smart.

Man's self-assurance is an abomination to God; his, his "know-it-all attitude", his competence in learning how to conduct services and perform ministry, establish organizations and conduct programs and outreaches all in the name of Christ is contrary to His Spirit. The spirit of foolishness, weakness and failure is the spirit that overcomes the powers of this world. This is the faith. Have we said "Yes" to that?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/weakness-and-foolishness/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net