

Articles and Sermons :: A Man in Whom the Spirit of God is by Art Katz

A Man in Whom the Spirit of God is by Art Katz - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2013/8/5 23:31

I cannot imagine a more appropriate night for this message. What I have visibly seen of your church life is probably as grand of a religion as can be experienced in our world. I am not sure that it can reach a greater pitch or peak than what has taken place tonight—the glory of the music, the worship, and the spirit of cordiality that prevails in the sanctuary. This has surely got to be the pinnacle, the ultimate in things that have to do with life in the service of God. But, how would you like to let it fall into the ground and die?

Tonight, I am going to paint a picture that so contrasts the euphoria you have just experienced in the service so far. It may well bring you cultural disorientation. In fact, you are going to have to make a rugged choice. Which of these two cultures will you choose? You will have to choose either what you presently know, in all of its glory, or you will have to choose apostolic splendor—fresh out of the book of Acts—in all of its magnitude, grisly sweat, suffering, blood, vexation, distress, and calamity.

Even this building is inconsistent with what is on my heart to speak tonight. Yet, in the same breath, can I say that I have never enjoyed such lovely hospitality? I have enjoyed the company of precious folk. I have eaten gourmet meals; you are seeing to every need of ours. Could this be true Christianity at its ultimate? I want to suggest that there is an apostolic reality and glory that far exceeds what you presently know. But, we shall never attain that glory except that we truly become men and women of the Spirit.

I was stunned by a remark that a man made not long ago, “Little of what is known to be the work or the activity of the Spirit of God is truly the Spirit of God.” What do you think of that statement? Suppose you could see as God sees. Imagine all the things that have excited and titillated your religious sensibilities—the glory of singing, the music, the instruments, the number of attendees, crowds, inspiring messages, etc. What would you say if I suggested that all of those things could be conducted in the realm of the soul? In other words, you could have it all and thereby think yourselves quite spiritual! Yet, it has neither a wit nor a grain to do with things of the Spirit! What would you say if I declared that that is the condition that prevails largely in Christendom today, especially in the charismatic world?

There is a nether world between the realm of soul and spirit that we so easily drift into without our even knowing it. Some of us have never truly experienced or walked in the Spirit of God. No one has ever faulted you for it. You may go on being backslapped, bear-hugged, and applauded all the way to the grave and never know the realm of the Spirit. Tonight, I want to give you a taste of something I call apostolic reality. I want you to be utterly spoiled from this night forth. I want you to be ruined for anything less than the pure presence of the Spirit of God. Do you want that? You may have to sell your building and all your fancy instruments! You may have to pull the plug from all your collective amplifiers!

I think we all need to heed a book that is rarely read. I was probably not ready for it when I picked it up a few years ago. It said nothing to me at that time. It is saying much more to me now. The book is called, *The Latent Power of the Soul* by Watchman Nee. How prophetic this book is! Before the advent of the first electronic amplifier, Nee suggested that one of the greatest menaces for the children of God at the end of the age would be that soulish realm of activity that emulates, imitates, counterfeits, and gives every appearance of being the realm of the Spirit. He mentions that there is something about music itself that has inherent possibilities for danger. Of all people and of all generations, we need the sharpest kind of sensitivity and discernment to be able to distinguish between that which is soulish and that which is spiritual.

I am going to be speaking out of the Book of Acts, chapters 17 and 16. I will begin with 17 and work backward. Last night I spoke on the passage that says, “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” (Genesis 41:38). The two words that leap out to my heart are man and spirit. Is that not a glory? Is that not incomprehensible? Does that not make your mind boggle? A man—not some papier-mâché disciple, not some pert character who has learned to quote the scriptures! A man, full-orbed, flesh and blood, tempered, matured, seasoned. This is not some graduate of a rush school of discipleship, but a man in whom the Spirit of God is! God is waiting for such a man and such a Body. His end-time intention will not be fulfilled without such ones. I believe that the man God is waiting for is a corporate man. Therefore, I am bound by your immaturity, limited by your fleshliness, and affected by your soulish substitutes for the things that are truly spiritual! “Till we all come into the fullness and stature

of Jesus Christ unto a perfect man” (Eph. 4:13).

My greatest disillusionment and heartbreak when I was saved thirteen years ago was taking my place in the local Pentecostal church, and finding the enormous divergence between the Book of Acts and what I had to experience every Sunday. What a disappointment! What I saw and experienced was a mock and a travesty for one who expected that we would be completing and continuing the Book of Acts. I have a Jewish heart for apostolic glory and for the grandeur of God, not for my sake, but for God’s sake. I have a heart for the men and women that will shake cities again. These are the men who “turn the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). And they did it all without the necessity of having to deafen our ears with their amplifiers.

Acts 17:16 says,

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him as he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

If “every good and perfect gift comes down from above, from the Father of lights” (James 1:17), then, in the same manner, every pure and holy work comes down from above. A curse on every so-called Christian work that does not have its origin in heaven! I don’t care if it is ostensibly for the Jews. I don’t care how groovy it is, how laden with Stars of David, how full of matzoh and reeling with yiddishkeit. It does not matter how cultural, or clever it is. I care only for this: that it has its origin from God, by His Spirit.

Paul saw, and God stirred. The amplified version of the Bible is even a little stronger: “Now while Paul was awaiting them at Athens, his spirit was grieved and roused to anger as he saw that the whole city was full of idols.” He saw; his spirit was stirred. That is the origin of every pure and holy work in the earth.

Are we willing to wait till God shall stir our spirits? When you are a full-orbed man like this, even when you are in between assignments, brought by other men to a place that you did not expect to be, God will begin something that shall culminate on Mars Hill and challenge the intellectuals of this generation. God is simply awaiting a man whose spirit He can stir. From that point on, what a progression unto glory!

Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews and with the devout persons and in the market daily with them that met with him (v. 17).

Something begins with the ignition of God in the spirit of a man. Then there is a “therefore.” He was roused to anger and grieved at a city given to idolatry, therefore “he disputed in the synagogue with the Jews.” If a man is vexed over idolatry, then what is he doing in the synagogue? That is exactly where he ought to be! That is where idolatry is most flagrantly practiced. Idolatry is not merely bowing down before some pagan idol? Idolatry is bending to any lesser altar than that of the Most High God. Idolatrous religions are those of convenience. They give men an opportunity to experience a modicum of religious, psychic, or emotional satisfaction and yet allow them to retain the lordship of their own lives. It is practiced everywhere—in synagogues, mosques, Presbyterian churches, Methodist churches, and Pentecostal assemblies. It is idolatry! Why, then, is your spirit not grieved? Being grieved is not some personal, idiosyncratic, subjective response. There is a difference between that which emanates from our flesh and that which has its origin in His Spirit.

I believe that every man who met with Paul in the marketplace was on a divine collision course. God intended for them to have that meeting. Don’t you love divine encounter? Don’t you like it when God sets it up? Are you preparing yourself to be a sensitive instrument in whom His Spirit can grieve? How foolish would you think me if I reprimanded a woman, a precious saint whom I have known for years, because she picked up the check at the table in the café where eight of us had breakfast together? “What do you mean you reprimanded her? You should have applauded her. She did a good thing.” But, good things are exactly what will keep us from God’s perfect thing. Do you not hunger for that which is perfect? If we keep doing good things that have their origin in our skull, and we will be completely incapacitated for the Spirit of God when He would have us to be moved.

Any one of us could have picked up the check, but she picked it up. I turned to her without thinking, and said, “Did God have you to do that?” “Oh, yes,” she said. Instead of resuming my conversation with the person on my right, I turned to her again and repeated a second time, “Did God have you to do that?” She giggled a little bit more nervously and said, “Yes.” But it was not quite as convincing this time. I turned a third time and said, “Did God have you to do that?” “Well,” she said, “I thought it would be a good thing.” Are we refraining from good things in order that we might be reserved unto Him for that which is perfect? Are we willing to suffer the reproach of isolation in Minnesota, thousands of miles removed from the main centers of Jewish life? We often receive mail from Jewish brothers in ministry, who are doing “great things” for God with their campaigns, rallies, street activity, and slogans. The easy tendency is to press on in doing what we think are “great things” for God, but are we willing to sit and wait for the Spirit of God to stir us? I am waiting for the apostolic glory of God. I am waiting for His campaign and His rally. I

am waiting for His cry to be sounded again in the earth, “Repent! For the Kingdom of God is at hand!” I know that it cannot be sounded until there is a Kingdom that is tangible, demonstrable, that can be seen, felt, looked at and examined.

As impressive as this service was tonight, it will not be enough to persuade my Jewish people to cleave to the Messiah. It is not enough to persuade them to embrace a way that has been polluted and corrupted for them by two thousand years of satanic perversion, distortion, and persecution, in the Name of Him who is salvation. No little glib entreaty is going to convince a Jew to walk away from the way of this world or to take upon himself the way of faith. No slick appeal will convince him to contradict all that he has esteemed, all that his life has been predicated upon, and to cast that upon the dung heap in order to walk in the way of foolishness. If he were to do so, a Jew would suffer unspeakable reproach from his own kinsmen, family, and community. A pleasing religion will never induce him to do it! I am waiting to show my kinsmen proof of the life of God in a glorious Kingdom of people, who have such absolute honesty and unfeigned love that you would think they were another race of men!

I am willing to wait for the building of this Kingdom and the stirring of my spirit by His Spirit when it shall please Him in His perfect moment. Only then will His Kingdom be in our midst. May God find us ready to respond as men and women of the Spirit who can “dispute in the synagogues with the Jews and the devout persons and in the marketplace daily” with those whom He would have us to encounter!

In my own life experience, I could tell you of the unconventional speaking of God, the insults of God, the goading of God. You would say, “That is not God. It is not nice. He would never do that! We didn’t learn that in our evangelistic discipleship school.” But God has given me such words in moments of heated confrontation in a Jewish fraternity house, where they were waiting to see the demise and the destruction of this Jewish freak. The place was jam-packed. They were waiting to see my head handed to me by a professor of comparative religion. He was a notorious atheist who spoke Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew. Here was a Gentile who spoke all three languages. Here I was, a Jew, and I do not speak any of them!

They only made one mistake that night—they let me speak first! The moment I opened my mouth, a holy hush came over that jammed place. I went on and on. Finally, about a half-hour into my presentation, these kids were nudging this professor and asking, “Aren’t you going to answer this man?” At last, the professor came up, made one or two lame, apologetic, intellectual remarks and left with his tail between his legs. No contest. That meeting went on for six hours. I saw vexed Jews. I saw spittle forming at the corners of their mouths. They got up in disgust, left the room, but came back two minutes later to take another seat. They hated it, but they loved it. They were too Jewish to walk away from it. Around ten o’clock that night, a kid came out of his seat with his fists clenched and his knuckles white. I thought, “Here it comes!” Everyone stopped breathing, including me. This kid was trembling like a leaf with a rage that was indescribable. “Katz,” he said, “if your God can save me as you’ve been saying, I defy Him to do it right now! Put up or shut up!” What would you answer in that moment? The Book of Acts is original, spontaneous, and powerful. It is a glory. It is utterly unique in every situation, given by God at that moment. We need to be restored to that high and holy standard, even if it costs us everything—our buildings, our programs, our choirs, our amplifiers, and our guitars—all of it!

I just opened my mouth, and there was God, dipping a great Turkish towel in icy water and knotting it. I opened my mouth and the Lord let him have it right in the kisser. Whap! “You need not think you can receive anything from God; your spirit stinks!” You say, “Art, is that the way you talk to your Jewish people?” No, that is the way He talks to my Jewish people—when He will have a mouth that will not hesitate to be open to speak the foolish and ungainly things of God that contradict one’s own sensibility, taste, and intention. You will never be such an instrument if you keep picking up the check because it is a “good thing.” That kid just fluttered his eyelids and sank into his seat like a lamb. Fifteen minutes later, he was the first one to be saved. Fourteen other Jews followed him into the Kingdom with trembling, shaking and weeping.

I cannot tell you how embarrassed I have been by this gospel. Doesn’t the Lord know that I have something of an intellectual reputation? Couldn’t He have given me something a little more advantageous to talk about, something that would have shown my own gifts to a greater advantage? The utter foolishness of the gospel! God has helped me to see that foolishness at 8 o’clock in the morning in Wheeling, West Virginia, opposite the desk of a Jewish business leader who owned the local radio station and other business interests. I called him and six other Jews, asking if they would come to that night’s meeting. They all told me the same thing: “Too busy, too busy, too busy.” The day will come when God will be too busy for you, buddy! This last man said, “Too busy.” I was just about to hang up when I heard myself saying, “But, sir, are you available tomorrow morning?” Then, to my utter amazement, the man said, “Yes, if you’ll be here by 8 o’clock.” I was there at 8 o’clock in the man’s office. What a man! What a picture of worldly success! He had a \$300 suit and diamond pinky ring. Why, he looked like a charismatic preacher! He was bright and alert. He had his diplomas on the wall with his honorary certificates from the B’nai Brith. He was a mensch

. He had arrived. But you should have seen me! Ah, what a crumpled specimen I was! I was drooped and wilted on the other side of that desk, which was like a football field. He looked at me with the vigor of a Jewish businessman and said, "What do you want? I'll give you fifteen minutes," and for the first time, I thought to myself, "Katz, what do you want?"

I never felt so foolish, vain, and absurd in all my life. I was going to tell this paragon of Jewish virtue, this man applauded by the Jewish community, this man who had been told by Gentiles that he was a better Christian than any Christian they knew, that the God of his fathers lay aside His glory and His deity and condescended to come to earth in the form of an infant, who made doo-doo in his diapers, utterly helpless, trusting in the hands of those to whom He was given, and then living a life of total obscurity. I was going to tell him that Christ had a brief tenure of ministry, where He experienced the rejection and reproach of His own people and concluded His life by being spat upon, beaten, pummeled, having His beard ripped out and His back filleted; then, finally, He was suspended on nails between heaven and earth, and if you believe that, by some kind of 'magical' faith, you appropriate that blood and somehow you are forgiven, covered, and restored.

"What do you want, Katz?" Under my breath, I said, "Lord, You got me into this. You answer the man." Well, whether He got us into it or not, He will invariably answer the man! May we always be kept from giving our own answers. I opened my mouth and said, "Sir, I am a servant of the Most High God who has come to show you the way of salvation." When I heard those words, I thought, "Oh no! Talk about icky! Here it comes, a hand on the scruff of my neck and the other on the seat of my pants and I'll be cast right down a flight of steps." I thought that he must have been thinking that I was some kind of Jewish eccentric-but he did not throw me out. Forty-five minutes later he said, with trembling and white lips, "What time does your plane leave?" I said, "About noon." He said, "Could you come back a little later? I've got to think about this."

Hallelujah for a Jew who will "think about this." I walked the streets of Wheeling, West Virginia praising God in the Spirit under my breath. I came back at the appointed time. Fifteen minutes after my return, his last question was, "But, Art, if I do as you say and call on the name of the Lord, will I be forsaking my Jewishness?" I said, "Dear brother, this is the establishing of your Jewishness." He said, "But I don't know how to pray." With his university degrees and awards on the paneled wall, he did not know how to pray. I said, "Just bow your head and follow me word for word." So he did, just like a child. As the glory of God filled the office, my scalp was tingling under the presence of God. I led him through a simple sinner's prayer, and as we came to the last line of the prayer, he gasped and quickly clasped his hands to his chest. As the prayer ended, he had his hands still on his chest with that stupefied expression on his face and said, "Art, what's that strange feeling in my chest?" I said, "You've just been born again by the Holy Spirit of God." Well, we know what happened to Paul:

Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and the Stoics encountered him and some said "What will the babbler say?" (v. 18).

So they brought Paul up to Mars Hill to hear further from him. He did not send a letter, weeks in advance, to the full gospel businessmen's director and say, "Listen, I think I'm going to be through Athens. Do you think you can fix me up with a little meeting or two?" None of that. It all began with the Spirit of God wincing in the spirit of a man. Verse 22 says,

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill and said, "You men of Athens, I perceive that in all things that you are too superstitious."

Whap! Do you want to insult intellectuals? Tell them that they are too superstitious. How would we have begun? "Unaccustomed to public speaking as I am, I want to take this occasion to say that I represent the gospel...." Paul did not begin by any conventional means; he began by the wisdom of God, appropriate for that moment, expressed by God's Spirit through one who counted all things as dung, including his own intellect, mentality, cleverness, and devices.

I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious, for as I passed by and beheld your devotions I found an altar with the inscription "To the Unknown God" whom therefore you ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you (v. 23). This is a man emboldened by the Spirit of God! Original by the Spirit of God! Cutting and compelling by the Spirit of God! You will find that he went on to make statements that were not at all religious; they were utterly philosophical. He spoke about the purpose of existence. He told them that God has established bounds and nations and has given all men on the blood for this one purpose: that they might seek after God and find Him. He spoke to philosophers philosophically. It was entirely appropriate, because God is always appropriate. Do you know what happened when they heard of the resurrection of the dead? "Some mocked: others said, 'We will hear you again on this matter.'" So Paul departed from a

among them.Â” Do you depart when men are no longer listening? I think I have started more Jews on the path to the gospel by turning on my heel and walking away from them than by demonstrating my cleverness to them. I am not in the business of vain disputation! When men are no longer hearing, I am no longer speaking.

I once went to a southern city, and some people arranged a luncheon for me with a Jewish business magnet. No one could reach him. He was tough. Â”But maybe Katz will bring him down.Â” He was willing for a little contest, so he invited us to lunch. I remember munching on that lunch, and because I did not say a word, this man became a bit irritated. He said, Â”How are you enjoying your free lunch?Â” I said, Â”I want you to know that, for me, this lunch is very costly.Â” I had already discerned his spirit and it stunk. He said, Â”Aren't you going to say anything to me?Â” I said, Â”No.Â” He asked, Â”How come?Â” I said, Â”If God is not speaking, then I have no intention of speaking either.Â” I have seen a lot of stunned Jewish faces that have discerned for the first time that this gospel is precious, because I would not share it with them if they only had a mind to dispute.

So Paul departed from among them. But certain men clave unto him and believed, among whom was Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them (vv. 33-34).

This is just a little episode from the life of Paul, caught between assignments, being taken by other men, fleeing from persecution, brought to Mars Hill, etc. It was an utterly consequential confrontation with the intellectuals of his generation. Some scoffed and mocked, while others said, Â”We want to hear of it again.Â” One or two believed.

Now I want to turn to my main text, Acts, chapter 16. This is my last night, so I am going to take full advantage of this opportunity. Â”Can we find such a man as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?Â” I want to give you a sketch of the kind of man God is speaking about and the kind of man He is seeking. Verse five says, And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily. Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the regions of Galatia and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, and after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas and a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Â”Come over into Macedonia and help us.Â”

There are three manifestations of the Holy Spirit in this passage, yet we can whiz through it as if we were reading some kind of cheap paperback. There are people sitting in this audience tonight, and certainly over the whole of Christendom, who have never experienced one manifestation of the Holy Spirit in ten or twenty or thirty years of their believing life! How is it, then, that these manifestations were so liberally poured upon the apostolic men of that generation? What strange and unusual manifestations! They were Â”forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.Â” You may have thought, Â”Hey, that's not God! We're establishing the churches daily and succeeding. That's Satan, trying to get us a way from a rich and rewarding area of ministry.Â” How sharp is your discernment? How many times have you labeled God's divine speaking as Â”satanicÂ” because it confounded your notion of what success is, or your notion of what God is wanting? How quick are we to pray for the sick, when it may be that God has a special dispensation of dealing with a particular soul and wants us to keep our hands off! To what degree have we as the church become a bunch of mechanical clods playing with new charismatic toys?

How many of us would have argued with God and said, Â”The Spirit of God will never contradict His own Word, and God has said in His Word, Â”Go ye into all the world and preach this gospel to every creature.Â” Oh, yeah? When? Who? Where? By what means? The God who gives the general invitation will also fill out the particular specifics, and until He does, I am not going anywhere, but when He does, then woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! God has a plan and He has a time. He is waiting for a man or a woman to fulfill it. He is waiting for one who can be stopped in the field of their own success. God's measure of success is not how man generally measures it. We should not measure success because every pew is filled, every budget is accounted for, and every service is groovy and delightful. Spend an afternoon the way that I have spent today in your own backyard. Go to the Washington State Hospital and see the schizophrenics, the vegetables, and the deranged. Go to an old age home and seek out some Jewish lady who is a bundle of bones and nerves, and try to speak something divine to her that would save her from a course with death and eternal destruction. See the lonely, the dejected, the crestfallen, and the broken! Let your vision go beyond these walls, and we will see just how successful we are. I will tell you that when God can arrest a man in the midst of his success, then He has got the man!

They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia and they came to Mysia. They tried to go to into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not (vv. 6-7).

We always think of the Holy Spirit saying, Â”Go, go, go!Â” Have we ever thought of the Holy Spirit saying, Â”Stop, stop, stop!Â”? When we are so eager beaver to do, can we hear the stops of God? I personally believe that the greatest mini

stries of God are worked through the unsung, the unheralded, the inconspicuous, and the unknown. Do you have a stomach for that? When we will have really gone into the earth and died, when there will no longer be the taint of flesh in our zealously and so-called "concerns," when the God who sees our hearts will know that there is nothing in us that is vain or egotistical that will subtly steal from His glory, when He will know that He has men and women that have been brought back from the dead, who have no life unto themselves and can be moved about and be brought to Athens by other men, when He will have men and women who do not have to prepare their strategies, their programs, or their plans, then we shall again see apostolic splendor and glory!

A vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia prayed him saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us (v. 9).

You may ask, "Why don't we see such visions, Art?" Well, are you in a position to go? Are you in a position to bring help? With what are your prayers most commonly occupied? Is it not yourself? "Lord, forgive me again; I blew it. Lord, help me. Lord, do for me—me, me, me, me." I was looking at your posters on these walls the other day:

Jesus is Lord: His word teaches me.

Jesus is Lord: He knows me.

Jesus is Lord: He loves me.

Jesus is Lord: He listens to me.

Jesus is Lord: He forgives me.

He gives me new life.

He lives in me.

Me, me, me, me! All these things are true, but if you are still egocentric and your whole understanding of the faith is the benefit that accrues to you, then you have actually missed the greatest salvation of God! He came to save us from egocentrism, not to give us a new brand of egocentrism that is spiritual! He wants men who are dead to themselves, and it does not matter to them whether it is Bithynia, Philippi, Timbaktu, or Athens, whether they are seen and heard or not seen and not heard. Pits, dungeons, unjust accusations, two years more—it is all the same! They can receive visions because they are in a position to give help.

And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas we came with a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day to Neapolis, and on to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia... (vv. 10,11).

Oh, glorious words! Don't they just come out of the page and strike you in the eyes? "Assuredly gathering...loosing from Troas...setting forth with a straight course, they came to the chief city." What a different tenor are those words, compared to the kinds of phrases that are current in our own modern day. We are filled with equivocation and compromise. Setting forth with a "straight course," they came to the chief city, "assuredly gathering that the Lord had called."

"Art, didn't you say that the vision came to Paul? How is it, then, that after he had seen the vision, 'immediately we endeavored to go?' " There is a pattern here that God cherishes. It is a pattern of men who are intricately and deeply related to other men, established by His Spirit in apostolic bands, heads over bodies. When the head receives the vision, the body "assuredly gathers" that the Lord had called us! God wants you to know that you are to set forth with a straight course, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called you because you are intimately, profoundly, realistically, truly, and spiritually joined to a head of a body who receives the vision of God! He who has seen the vision had better be assured that he has seen the vision. If he is a man like Paul, with no life unto himself, no ambition for himself, no intention for himself, and if he is on God's divine course, then he will assuredly receive the vision.

So they came to the chief city, and on the Sabbath we went out of the city by the riverside where prayer was wont to be made, and we sat down and spoke unto the women which resorted there (v. 13).

Oh, Paul! God brings you all the way from Asia to Europe, and, on the Shabbat, when the synagogues are bursting at the seams, you go out of the city? Where does it say that the Spirit of God said, "Paul, get thee out of the city?" Well, it doesn't. I believe that Paul had nothing more than just an inkling. He just had a hunch. He just had an intimation, but it was a holy intimation. It was a holy hunch, and he was required to act upon it. Even though it contradicted every evangelical rule and wisdom, they went out of the city where women were known to resort for prayer. Do you know what happened? A woman got saved there and was baptized. She was a seller of purple linen. She constrained them to come in and to fellowship with them. Does that mean that he went all the way to Europe for one woman? That he left behind churches that were being built and added to daily—for one woman?

I am reminded of the gospel outreach in the City College of New York, which is 85% Jewish. The rabbis took me on and made me look like a fool. They cut me down to size. I was left like a trembling hulk when the word fell out of my mouth I imply, dead to the floor, without anointing. I was devastated by the disappointment of God not honoring my fasting and prayer. We had spent months in preparation for that meeting. It was the first gospel outreach in the history of that Jewish institution. We had a vision that the fire of God was going to fall and the Jewish students would take it into their neighborhoods. The only thing that fell was the limp word that came out of my mouth—plop! But you should have heard the ‘anointing’ on the rabbis! Talk about words that could cut a man down! The most painful thing of all was the disappointed faces of the Christian brethren. They did not say a word. Would to God they had said something! “Katz, we thought you were an anointed mouthpiece. We thought God had given you a ministry of encounter. What’s the matter? Don’t you know how to pray? Did you ever hear of fasting? Is there secret sin in your life?” I could not volunteer any explanation to them, because God was not giving me a word of explanation. Can we go without explanation? Will we be foolishly used of God without explanation? Will we suffer disappointment without explanation? Are we willing to wear the crown of thorns, that we might wear the crown of glory? We are not going to have the one if we are not willing for the other.

For three weeks, I licked my wounds. And there was Satan at my elbow saying, “Katz, you blew it. You never should have left the teaching profession. What made you think you were called to minister to your own Jewish people? God gave you a grand opportunity and you were pitiful! You couldn’t answer those Jews! It was a failure! There will never again be such an opportunity.” I whimpered for three weeks until there was a phone call. A thin voice said, “Mr. Katz, I read your book. I’m a Jewish woman. Could I come over? I’ve got some questions.” She came over. Her veins were all sticking out and her eyes sunken into her skull. She was a nervous wreck and a compulsive chain smoker. She filled up my ashtray with cigarettes and asked me questions, the last one being, “Mr. Katz, what must I do to be saved?” I told her, “Believe on the Lord Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.” So she bowed her skinny little neck and followed me in a prayer for salvation. She had passed from death to life, and consequently spent her time distributing New Testaments, Christian literature, and copies of my testimony, Ben Israel, from her apartment in New York City.

As I was putting her coat on her frail shoulders that night, walking her to the door I said, “By the way, how did you get my book and how did you come here?” “Oh,” she said, “My son was at your meeting three weeks ago at City College. He came home so excited. He said, ‘Mom, a man came to the school today, a Jewish man, and he just simply stood up and spoke of his convictions. The moment he finished he was mercilessly attacked, and he answered his accusers not a word. I’ve never seen anything like it. Here, read his book.’” The eye of God roves to and fro over the face of the earth, seeking that one whose heart is perfect toward Him (2 Chr 16:9).

What are you looking for? Numbers? Can you be moved from your success for just one person? Unless you’re willing to cast your ministry away for one, you have no valid ministry. God took men away from a successful field of venture in order that a woman in a city called Philippi might be found on the day of the Shabbat outside the city and there receive the word of God unto salvation.

It came to pass as we went to prayer a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. And the same followed Paul and us and cried saying, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation. She continued doing this for many days, but Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her,’ and it came out the same hour’ (v. 16–18).

Paul was not bugged or irritated; he was grieved. You say, “Art, when I see a demoniacal woman whose life is not her own, I’ll also be grieved.” Well, what about the ones all around you whose voices may not be high-pitched, cracked, or shrill? Are their lives any more their own than this woman’s was? What is the matter with the idolatry that is everywhere around you? Why is God’s Spirit not wincing in your spirit? Where is that grief, born of the love of God, that makes faith into power to set the captives free, the faith that works by love, not our human thing pumped up, but the divine fervency of God that flows in the lives of those who have put away their shabby, sentimental, and temperamental substitutes? May God keep me from another backslap, bear hug, or any other kind of pseudo expression of affection, except there be a burning fervency in my heart by His Spirit for the man to whom He would bring me in embrace! May they think me a cold fish; may they think me unloving—and they do! May I suffer the reproach of being a man who is supposed unloving! I do suffer it! I do not allow any shabby, schmaltzy, sentimental substitutes to stand as “good things” and deter the perfect, divine fervency of God that takes faith and makes it alive to set the captives free.

“Paul, being grieved,” or the Scripture could better say, “God, being grieved in Paul.” May God keep me from my own sentimental thing until His grief finds expression through me! It is either Him or us, folks! And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrate saying, “These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive neither to observe being Romans.” And the multitude rose up together against them and the magistrates rent of their clothes and committed to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison charging the jailer to keep them safely, who having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks (vv. 19- 24).

What would we have said if we had been living at that time, and this had happened to us? “Lord, how did we miss it? We thought we had a divine vision and look at us now, publicly humiliated, clothes rent from our bodies as orthodox Jews, thirty-nine strokes of a fearful instrument that has left our backs hanging in strips. We are cast into a filthy, stinking dungeon that reeks from human excretion and urine, with the scurrying of rats and vermin, and the moans and groans of prisoners. Where did we fail. We never should have left Asia. What are we doing out here anyhow? This is just some pagan outreach. Okay, so we got a woman saved, but why this now?”

But the scriptures say, “At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God. And the prisoners heard them” (v. 25). I am expecting to see every one of the prisoners in heaven. Oh, that the prisoners might hear us! Not our little bleeps, evangelisms, and tract distributions! May they hear the praise of God’s people, not when our stomachs are full and we are well-clothed, fashionable and sitting in comfort in the company of the saints! May they hear our praise in the midst of our distress, duress, and affliction! I do not think that the Lord is going to conveniently rapture us from any future time of trouble. Our God-sent distress will be the hour of the church’s greatest glory, through those that can praise Him at midnight!

This kind of praise does not come by charismatic exercises and hoopla. You do not learn this kind of praise from a song book. This is praise that has to do with your knowledge of God, which is not cheap or conveniently obtained. And suddenly there was a great earthquake. The foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s bands were loosed (v. 26).

This is no coincidence; God inhabits the praises of His people. Where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty. He will be there in proportion to the authenticity of your praise in the midst of the direness of your distress. How shall we do when our backs are hanging in strips in excruciating pain, when we cannot even adjust our posture because our feet have been made fast in the stocks? In a generation that is sprayed and pampered with underarm deodorants and every other kind of bodily enhancement, are we really being prepared for the eventualities that must come to those who are obedient to the heavenly vision?

The important thing is that the prisoners heard them singing in the midst of their suffering. Then the earthquake shook the bars, and the fetters fell off. Everyone’s bands were loosed!

And the keeper of the prison, awakening out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing the prisoners had been fled, but Paul cried with a loud voice saying, “Do thyself no harm: for we are all here (vv. 27-28).

If Christ has brought you to a cell, then you are free in it. When the doors burst open, there should be no disposition to run. You are as free within as you are without. It is the man who holds the keys who is bound! It says that Paul cried with a loud voice. I do not know if he could even see the jailer with his eyes. I am assuming that it was a gift of knowledge by the Spirit. “Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas” (v. 29).

With this statement from the jailer, we have the anatomy of a conversion. This is a life that is going to be transformed. It is not some guy being superficially saved, who goes on just as fleshly and carnally as he was before. He called for a light, and sprang in...and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” How many of us are giving answers to men who have not yet asked the question! How many of us have our car bumpers loaded with stickers, with answers for men who have not yet asked a single question? Rather, our function ought to be to bring men to such a divine discontent that they implore us, “Sir, what must I do to be saved?”

And he took them the same hour while he washed their stripes, and Paul baptized him and all his house straightaway. When he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house (v. 33-34).

This was a small episode in the life of Paul, a man “in whom the spirit of God is.” Stopped by the Holy Spirit, directed by visions, he never did see that Macedonian man, but God put him on the divine course. He was kicked out of the city, persecuted in Thessalonica, and brought by other men to Athens, en route to another city. His spirit grieved, and God gave him yet another divine encounter of eternal consequence.

Are we waiting for a vision of someone calling us at night, bidding us to come? Are we in a position to bring the help? Will we set forth with a straight course, assuredly gathering that the Lord has called us and assuredly reckoning that our obedience is going to be rewarded with suffering? In the midst of the suffering, will we praise God? In the midst of the stink, dung, vermin, and discomfort, will we praise God, so that the prisoners might hear us? That cannot be done by fleshly exercise or by singing choruses; it must be done by a man “in whom the Spirit of God is.” Such a man is not fashioned in a day. Are we willing to be enrolled in the apostolic school? Are we willing to give away our best in order that we might know this kind of reality and glory? I cannot imagine this age ending without the same apostolic glory as it began, through men “in whom the spirit of God is.”

Prayer:

I want you to bow your heads, because I believe God is recruiting tonight. He is looking for men and women who have a realistic anticipation that suffering is the consequence of obedience to the heavenly vision, and yet are still willing to be arrested and stopped in the midst of their successes, so that God can bring them where He will—even for one soul. If you are such a one and want to be established in the school of preparation for suffering, martyrdom, or going up to hills from which you may not come down, then I ask you to stand right now and settle it with the Lord. The things that keep you from this reality are your own wits, your cleverness, your savvy, your ability, your evangelical expertise. Let the Lord empty you of all that. Let Him undo you! He will bring you to the school of humiliation. He will bring you to impasses that you will not be able to explain to others, because He has not explained them to you. He will ask you to praise Him in that circumstance, so that the prisoners might hear you. Is there a soul here who has had a gut full of phony burdens that are not heartfelt or a so-called love for the Jews that is sentimental and shabby? Have you never experienced the divine burden of God that burns and will not let you go? Are you willing to be a vessel through whom the grief of God can be expressed? Are you willing to be seen as an ungainly freak because of the way that He would have you to respond to His grief? Are you willing to confront men in the Spirit of God by calling them ignorant or by telling them that their spirits stink? You will be a reproach, a shame and a scandal, even to Christians. They will tell you that you blew it and will say, “What are you doing in a cell anyhow, when God had you in a groovy ministry that was successful?”

So, precious God, in the Name of Jesus, if this has been the Word of Truth tonight, out of Your heart, and if this has not been the exercise of a man, if this has been the cry of God looking for a man or a woman, calling us to the apostolic conclusion of the age, then I ask you to seal, by name, every soul that has stood to their feet for this invitation tonight. Lord, I do not ask that You spare them. You have not spared me, and I am only at a beginning of these things. We are not asking that You give us an explanation to take the sting out of our humiliation. We are just asking that You, who know our frame, would shape us. Cut away all the so-called “good things.” Give us the willingness to suffer services that fail, rather than manipulating men and getting things moving, in order to give the appearance of something that looks spiritual, but is only a soulish counterfeit.

Give us the willingness to experience failure and disappointment, because we have determined to seek only the glory of God, by the Spirit. Oh, precious God, seal us with this divine call. We know that You mean business. Deal with us where we are. Shake us to our foundations. Show us every counterfeit thing which we have been pleased with up to now. Strip us. Make us barren, in order that You might raise up and bring forth “a man in whom the spirit of God is.” Amen