

Articles and Sermons :: Holiness or Blessing? (audio transcript)

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(Transcript of message spoken in Australia in 1996 in the aftermath of a visitation by popular evangelists sweeping through the Church and the nation in a very dubious manner.)

Let's pray. Precious God on High, put a guard on this mouth. Let not a word, not a syllable be emitted that does not have its origin in You. Lord, we don't give a rap to hear a man's opinion, however clever or interesting it might be. We want to hear Your heart. What do You have to say, my God, about what is taking place in Your Christendom? Why have You appointed this morning for that purpose? Lord, our hearts are open; take Your full liberty. Give us ears to hear not only You speaking, but also what You are saying between the lines. If it's a statement beyond this church that somehow will go out through a tape or just the word by which prophets often begin—"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, the Lord has spoken"—then let it be that, but do speak. We thank You and give You the praise for our privilege to hear from the Living God, in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

Well, I read Psalm 18 this morning, the psalm of the day, and I love it. I am just going to take some portion of it, because it evokes a sense of God that I think we desperately need. Knowing God is what this life is all about, saints. What is the Church without a sense of God and the holiness of God? If we lose that, what do we have? If we have everything else and lose that, what have we? What are we? What is our witness? How shall we ever move Jews to jealousy? There is nothing more to be coveted, more to be cherished, more to be preserved, more to be watched over than the sense of God as He in fact is, and not as we may have thought Him to be. This pursuit of God may be a lifelong quest, and everything in the world, even in the religious world, conspires against that knowledge; even our own religion, our own enthusiasm, our own desire for successful meetings might ironically oppose and be the greatest detriment to our knowledge of God.

If you cannot understand me, then you have no sense of irony or paradox, which is implicit in the faith. I am very fond of a statement by Karl Barth, the Swiss theologian: "nothing more reveals our pathetic humanity than seeking to serve God or to celebrate God or to worship God out of it." The contradiction is so apparent and so painful. It is an injunction to be the people of the resurrection—sons and daughters of God who have risen above mere human religion, mere sordid excitement—and to live in the Spirit. Maintaining that place of life in the Spirit might require, ironically, not more sound and more noise, but more silence. Psalm 18, beginning with verse 7, says,

Then the earth shook and quaked and the foundations of the mountains were trembling and were shaken because He was angry. Smoke went up out of His nostrils and a fire from His mouth devoured. Coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also and came down with thick darkness under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub and flew, and He sped upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him, darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies. From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds, hailstones, and coals of fire. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered His voice. Hailstones and coals of fire, and He sent out His arrows and scattered them, and lightning flashes in abundance and routed them. Then the channels of water appeared, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at Thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils.

Is that not yummy? I know it is anthropomorphic, and a skeptic can dismiss God being described with nostrils and smoke and all of that, but I love what is being conjured up. I think that we desperately need it, because God is in danger of being made commonplace. We are fashioning Him in our own image, and we are not even aware of the unconscious thing we are doing. We need to be reminded of, or perhaps we have never even known, the mightiness of God. He is other than

an what we ourselves are. Maybe I am speaking ancestrally as a Jew, and something in my gut remembers God's grief over us: **"You thought I was such a one as you are"** (Ps 50:21). God was not complimenting us, but enjoining us, when He said, **"The knowledge of Me is taught by the precept of men"** (Isa. 29:13 Paraphrased). It was an insult. The prophet was saying, "You have fallen so low that your knowledge of Me is taught by the precept of men." How, then, should our knowledge of God be obtained? It must be through some other way. Once you have resorted to precept, it is no longer God. It may be about God's principles, but it is not God Himself. I think it is clear: the fear of God is absent from the Church. There is a rather slack atmosphere, a kind of go-along-with-it and matter-of-fact attitude, a blas  ; or is it Australia, a complacency that we are sensing in your country that has even infected the Church? You have to contend for the faith once and for all, and if you think that means its doctrines, you need to think again. The doctrines are kid's stuff. I love the doctrines, but that is not our problem; it is the faith. The apprehension of God as He is, that fear and awe, the sense of God, tempers everything, and if it is not to be found in the Church, what shall we hope for in Australia? Little wonder, then, that these recent "signs" phenomena that come down the pike find such ready acceptance. What a ready-made audience looking for novelty, needing a lift, needing an experience, needing a blessing. In reality, your Christian life is hardly more than a succession of predictable Sundays. You do need something, but, unhappily, what you are grasping for is not what you really need. In fact, it will probably move you further from the obtainment of what you need than you might know.

I am really concerned for the Church in Australia this morning, just for its own sake, let alone that there is no other agency given in the earth by which Jews are to be made jealous. If we fail in that, we fail in everything. Although Paul does not articulate and define what it is that we are to do to make Jews jealous, it is evidently something we have not yet done. It is probably not so much by our doing, but more by our being, that they should come into our assembly and stop and gasp, and throw their hands over their mouths, or hold their chest for the sense of God that is present with us, who is holy, holy, holy. I do not think there is any more awesome demonstration to an unbelieving Jew than the light that lightens the Gentiles, which is also the glory of the people Israel.

That is why I am here this morning. I should have been dead 32 years ago, except that I saw something that drew me to jealousy. As an atheist and a vehement enemy of the faith, I breathed out murderous threats against what I considered to be a deterrent to human progress: the Church. However, I saw the light that lightens the Gentiles and the glory of the people Israel in the face of an unsuspecting piece of innocence, a transparent little American girl on vacation in Switzerland where I was hitchhiking, looking for philosophical answers. I do not think that Israel is going to see that glory except in your light. Just before we leave this Psalm, verse 25 says,

With the kind, Thy doest show Thyself kind. With the blameless, Thou doest show Thyself blameless. With the pure, Thou doest show Thyself pure. And with the crooked, Thou doest show Thyself astute.

The margin says "twisted." I think that is a remarkable statement, that somehow the apprehension of God is very much affected by our seeing, by what we bring to Him, because it is not a matter of what God is objectively, but how we perceive Him. Therein lies the problem. We are bringing a distortion out of our own subjectivity, out of our own twisted thinking. We see God out of a prism of our own being, and I will tell you that the way some people are seeing God is quite cheap, as if He were some kind of lackey or errand boy. You have provided these so-called evangelists with the convenience of meetings by which offerings can be taken, so that they can leave the nations they exploit with millions, and somehow there is not a blush, let alone a twitch of contradiction, because they think God is somehow compatible with all that and part and parcel of all that. I am sure that they are laughing all the way to the bank, thinking that they are doing God and God's people service. It requires something from us to perceive God rightly.

"With the pure Thou doest show Thyself pure." If you have any kind of controversy with God this morning, the problem is not with Him, but yourself. You are projecting something on Him. You are becoming guilty of Israel's sin. **"You thought that I was such a one as you are."** The thing that we need is to be transformed into His image, and not to project our image on Him. He is not a convenience      He is God! He is the Creator. He is the Almighty. I do not have words and adjectives. I think those words have lost their cogency. We may have said them too often. It has become a catechism or an invocation of a mechanical kind. Unless you know Him in the place that is too deep for words, do you really know Him? Until there is a gasp and a sputter, until you find yourself prostrate and stretched out as dead, do you really know Him? How many of us will go through an entire Christian lifetime without that knowledge and be perfectly content, thinking that we are doing God a service and that we know Him and can communicate Him?

Verse 27: **"For Thou doest save an afflicted people, but haughty eyes Thou doest abase."** Wow! Just a haughty look, God despises. He despises haughtiness, human self-exaltation, religious pomp, hotshots, the "man of the hour," etc. When I see the videotapes of those characters, I see swaggering, hitching up, someone calling some precious little old lady "dearie." Where do you come off with a snotty remark like that, when that woman should be respected? She is not your dearie, and do not think you are going to blow her down by your breath. It is a carnival, dear saints. It does not matter what measure of supposed blessing is being obtained. God is being denigrated. It is an irretrievable loss for the name and the reputation and the ardor of God, who does not lend Himself to carnivals.

We are in the Last Days. These are solemn and awesome days, and He is waiting for the fulfillment of mandates and callings that are so monumental, it requires a people of apostolic and prophetic stature, not clowns, to perform. He hates haughty eyes; He hates that pomp of men who can move their little finger and numbers fall in the process. You may say, "Well, brother, if that is not God, then by what power are they falling?" I am glad you asked that. You should have asked it long before, and you need to continue asking it. Verse 28: **"For Thy doest light my lamp, the Lord my God illumine s my darkness whereby Thee I can run upon a troupe, and by my God I can leap over a wall."** Well, I needed to read that just to wash my own soul. I just feel, somehow, gritty. Before I can get into anything else, I just need a little washing of water from the Word.

Let us start first with Jeremiah 15, verse 19. This is on my heart this morning. **"Therefore, thus says the Lord, if you return, then I will restore you. Before me you will stand. And if you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become my spokesman."** I think other versions read, "If you remove the sacred from the profane or the vile, then you will become spokesman." I think we need to be about this. There needs to be a separation. We need to disengage ourselves from the things that are profane, because the whole world is profane. There is a process of profanation taking place everywhere. There is something that is cheapening and degrading in television, in language, in street conversation. It is worse in my own country than in yours, but how long before yours will catch up? The Church needs to be jealous for the sanctity of words and of language, and I am not even talking about biblical language; I am talking about language period. I am talking about the exquisite privilege of being made in God's image that allows us to speak. To cheapen that, to make our small talk really small, to trivialize our life, to not hold dear the things that sanctify us and make us human in God's image, is to enter the process by which everything is being made profane.

You are called to be a nation of priests, and the priest has the obligation to teach the people and the nation the difference between the things that are holy and the things that are profane. How shall we teach what we ourselves do not know? We have not extended ourselves to find out these things and to preserve and to keep them alive in our own consciousness and before our own children. Maybe there is no way that we can pursue these things and move in this way, except we take the TV set out of the house. It is not enough just to shut it off. I used to keep it for the news, but I will tell you that the news is becoming as vulgar and obscene as anything else. In between it all, there are advertisements of other programs, and by the time you have watched the news, you have become polluted. It is not worth it to find out what is going on in the world if that is the price we have to pay, having our own spirits being made sodden and dulled. Then we try to come into the Scriptures, and we find that we are not profiting. It is dull, and we no longer enjoy it. We do not have a time of devotion that is a delight. Praying is a kind of drudgery at best, a mechanical requirement. Our spirits are being made dull. We are being profaned because we have not separated the sacred from the profane. We have not kept it at a distance. We have forgotten that we have a God who says, **"Do not mix linen and wool. Do not harness an ox and an ass together."** Why? Do they not pull? Does it not work? Is it not expedient? Is it not efficacious? The question is not whether it works. Sure it is going to work. Linen and wool will probably make a lovely garment, but it is a mixture. It is an adulteration, and God said, **"Thou shalt not mix. Thou shalt be separate and holy unto Me."**

There is a lot of mixing going on, and we have not been careful to separate the precious from the vile. **"Then you will become My spokesman."** Oh, praise God! When is the last time you have heard one? We hear a lot of preaching, a lot of words, but a spokesman is one who bears the message and the burden of the Lord. I think there is a famine already in the land for the hearing of the Word of God. In the midst of the welter of cassettes, video and ministries that are profuse, where are the spokesmen of the Lord? This is their requirement: to separate the cheap, the trivial, the trite, the common place, from the things that are holy and the things that are sacred, lest the holy thing itself becomes swamped and trivialized. What hope is there, dear saints, if God should become trivialized? What hope for anything? What standard for any

hing? To what shall the world look to if there is no standard in the Church? Ezekiel 22 speaks of that, of Israel's pathetic condition, and I think we ourselves are moving toward it as the Church. It would be a remarkable thing if, at the end of the age, God would have a remorseful Israel and a remorseful Church. Both have fallen short of the glory of God, and both require the mercy of God. He says in Ezekiel 22, verse 26,

Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the profane. They have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they hide their eyes from my Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

Further on, in Ezekiel 44, verse 23, He says, **"Moreover, they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean."** Well, we are the royal priesthood and the priesthood of all believers. There is no room for any of us to be slack. We all need to be vigilant in our priestly obligation, not only to know ourselves and to separate the profane from the holy, but also to communicate and to teach that to men. Can I quote a little bit from a newsletter article that I have written? By the way, if anybody is becoming endeared to me through this morning, strange soul that you might be, and wants to have some continuing contact, we publish this newsletter four times a year, and we have a small overseas readership. We would be happy to put you on if you give us a clearly printed address. This article is called, "Some Questionary Thoughts on the Present 'Revival'."

I felt an obligation as a priestly and prophetic man to say something, and here is the "something" that I had to say, only in part: "We're not in a position to categorically condemn as deception the ostensible benefits to which many testify. God is always free to bless whom He will bless." I think that may well be happening; naive souls in simple faith come into those places, and coming with an expectancy can be met by God, despite the questionable thing that is taking place. However, I would not say that that blessing that is received confirms or validates the entire thing that is going on, because that is exactly what makes deception a deception. It is mixed, and it contains elements that are dubious and suspicious, while at the same time there seems to be apparent blessing. Who has the acumen and the discernment of priestly stature to see through? Whose discernment has been increased by the exercise thereof? Who can discern that which is good and that which is evil, that which is profane and that which is holy? The mere invocation of the name of the Lord has become a "cheapie." Everyone can vocalize that. Does that sanctify it? Does that make it official? That is exactly the thing that is profane: the employment of the name of God to somehow validate the human and religious thing that we are promoting.

I will tell you—and you can pray for me—as a young Jewish believer, 32 years ago, my most painful entry into the Church was to see the glib frequency with which Gentile Christians took the name of the Lord to their lips. I am not sure if you know this, but Orthodox Jews, who are still in darkness, never having had the revelation of the Messiah, will not even spell the word "God." It is G³/D. You do not vocalize. You do not take that word so frequently to your lips, or you will find yourself cheapening it. Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, until we forget what "Lord" means. I quite appreciate the revival that came to Argentina when a certain pastor, Carlos Ortiz, had a gut full, and forbade his congregation to employ the word at all; he put a moratorium on the word "Lord." There was to be no speaking until He became Lord in fact—Lord of your pocketbook, your attic, your spare room, your car, your bank account, your retirement, your benefits, all those things. Until He is the Lord of it all, He is not the Lord of anything. He was not going to allow that word to be bandied about in apparent contradiction with what was the truth of the condition of his congregation. Oh, praise God for a man like that. I pray that he is yet that man, but I am a little bit apprehensive, seeing that he has gone on to the staff of the Crystal Cathedral in California. There is a little disquiet in my soul. May the Lord preserve him in his integrity and blamelessness, because one does not automatically maintain that without a daily, moment-by-moment vigilance.

I am not knocking blessings; some may authentically be receiving. But our point is that if they can succeed in bringing the Church to viewing benefit as the determinant by which something is judged to be of God, we may well have been brought to the very ground of deception itself. Is that all it takes to persuade you, that you receive a benefit, or a blessing, or a release from some personality disorder? Is that all it takes? Satan is well able to counterfeit and provide that. There is something more important than benefits. There is something more important than release. It is the holiness of God. It is His name. It is His honor. It is who He is in Himself. A benefit of a dubious kind is too high a price to pay if it is going to throw any shadow upon His great name. We will have lost everything in the name of benefit, if even the desire for benefit is suspect.

I have often been astonished when the appeals for healing come. Almost everyone comes out of their seat. I have never seen such a sick church everywhere, and I think we will continue to be sick so long as we live egocentric lives—³/₄even spiritually speaking. What will be the first statement or question you raise when you leave this room this morning? "What did you think of the speaker? Did you like? Did you like?" Is not your liking the center of your being? So, you have shifted from carnal centrality to spiritual centrality, but you are still the center. No wonder you are sick. No wonder you need continually to be healed. Until we make God the center—His glory, His honor, His name, and His eternal purposes—we will continue to be sick. That is why we are sick. We have a false center, and it is in ourselves, in our fellowship, in our denomination; we say our, our, our, mine, mine, mine.

Continuing from my article, "So for myself, I would choose to keep my distance from such phenomena, trusting that whatever I might be missing is not greater than what I am protecting and cherishing and that the Lord is not offended by a carefulness that would rather err in a jealousy for His holiness than to risk subverting what has already been given as pure and true." Do you know this, dear saints? There is no such thing as coming out the same. You are either going to suffer loss or obtain gain. Do not allow yourself and submit yourself to come into an environment of a certain kind and even to receive the blessings and the laying on of hands. I want to be careful who lays hands on me, because with every laying on of hands, there comes a transmission of the condition of that one who is extending his hands. It is amazing what people will open themselves for, and some of these characters have said, "We know that this is a mixed bag, but we're so desperate for something to happen, that even if Satan is getting in on the act, and even if flesh is exhibiting itself, at least something is happening." My God, they have never read Psalm 18 or any of the text I am quoting today. Do you know what I am saying here? We need to be jealous for what God has already given.

I want to ask you, dear saints, do you have a residue of God? Do you have a precious accumulation of something that has been worked in your inner being in its depths in communion with God over the course of your spiritual history? Do you have a history with God? Do you know God in the kind of knowledge that has to do with His sufferings? It is the kind of knowledge that comes through trials, through being stretched and broken, and through dealings that many would shut themselves off from because they are painful. I cherish all the residue of the knowledge of God that has come by that way. Do you know how I test whether something is of God or not? I still my soul, because the false preachers want you to be engaged by your soul—the noise, the amplifiers, the music, the motion, the activity, everybody moving and getting into the act. I become like a lump, a painful disjuncture. I am "out of it," and it is not pleasant to be "out of it" when everything is tugging at you to be "one of the boys" and to go along, but there I am, standing like a lump, not measuring by my soul. I have shut that off.

In fact, can you even distinguish between your soul and your spirit? Or is it one big blur? I wait to see if my spirit is hospitable to what is being mediated, so that I know if it is compatible with my already-existing knowledge of God. If it is not compatible, then they can stand on their heads, they can run all over the platform, they can climb the flagpoles, which they do, and every other kind of madness, and I am completely imperturbable and unmoved. I will not give myself to it at all. I need to guard my sanctity. I need to guard my integrity in God, or else you who are here this morning would be getting something less and other than what you are receiving. You would be getting something much less if I allowed myself to be sucked in, and influenced, and taken up, and affected by the current trends.

"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are all the issues of life" (Pr. 4:23). You say, "Brother, the way you talk and carry on, is there time enough for that kind of Christian living? You make it sound like a full-time occupation. I only have time on Sunday for an hour or two, and I might even come to a mid-week service, but the way you're talking about maintaining your spirit and guarding yourself, and growing in the nurture and the faith, and all these obligations, you make it sound like that's the whole purpose of our being." Exactly. Exactly. What did you think Church was—³/₄a Sunday supplement? Hey, we are coming to the end of the age. God has great purposes to consummate through a Church that knows Him, and will do great exploits out of that knowledge, and that knowledge is not cheap.

Paul says, **"Oh, that I might know him in the fellowship of His sufferings"** (Phil. 3:10). There is a knowledge of God here that is so exquisite, not to be obtained in any other place. Have you been inducted into the mindset of the world, which is, the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, protecting your life, your privacy, guarding yourself, lest there be

any threat, injury, or pain? No wonder the Church is hardly more than a conglomerate of individualities living their private lifestyles. Where is the Church of the apostolic kind, where those who believed were together? **"And with power, great grace was upon them all, and with power gave the apostles testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ"** (Acts 4:33). There is going to have to be some snapping, popping, and breaking between yourself and your Australian culture and mindset, the English overtones that have come in, and caused you to put up your brick walls, and the sanctity of your separation and private life, which are contrary to the ethos, the character, and the genius of true church. True church is suffering before it is a glory, just by what we ourselves are, together, in the intensity of that life. Until we will go that way, we will not move anybody to jealousy, and certainly not Jews.

You might say, "Well, Art, don't be so critical. Don't think that this is a carnival and these guys are clowns." Well, they look and act like it. Men who are ministers of the Word of God are in a stupor; they stand there and sag and splutter, and repeat themselves insanely, and then collapse, and you are saying that that is God-honoring? Then they make statements like, "I've seen more blessing now under this blessing than ever was obtained through the preaching of the Word." I will tell you, dear saints, I may not be much, but I am jealous for the preaching of the Word of God, and when I see a phenomenon touted as revival, where the Word of God is conspicuously absent and denigrated as not being the source of God's greatest blessing, but experience has replaced it, my alarm goes off instantly $\frac{3}{4}$ and yours ought to as well.

"Well, Art, they're doing a lot more preaching now." Sure they are, because they are sensitive to the criticism that has come, but what kind of preaching is it? They preach the most commonplace blah that any dupe could put together out of a few scriptures and call that a message. Even the prophets that are being celebrated are not speaking prophetically, and we do not even know enough to recognize that. If they can tell us a few personal things about ourselves, that is all we want. Why do we need to be assured that God knows us, and, look, this prophet was able to say something about us? Where is the prophetic word? Where are the oracles of God? Where is the weighty thing that we need to hear for the Church in the Last Days, in all of the precarious things that are going on? That is the prophetic word. Where is it? The Word of God has been rudely shelved and declined, and if something is merely "biblical," then that is enough for us.

Well, if this is not the lying signs and wonders that we have been warned would characterize the Last Days, then when those lying signs and wonders do come, how will they be substantially different in form and appearance from what is presently taking place? How will we exercise then the discernment that we are incapable of exercising now? The Church needs to be stirred up, saints. We need to be called to maturity. If we are not able to recognize the false prophets now, then how will we recognize the greater deceptions that are to come? There will be wonders. There will be miracles. There will be demonstrations of power. They will be beneficial, but they will be lying signs and wonders. If we are only concerned with the benefit and not all that much with the source, then will we discern it?

I know that there is a gift of discernment, but I also know that there is an exercise of discernment that is corporate, and is reflected in the stature and quality and the maturity of the corporate people of God. Are you able to discern, not only the things that are evil, but also the things that are good? I want to tell you that it is the things that are good that are most likely to trap us. It is good to go here, and it is good to do this, and it is good to take care of that need. It is the good things that will be our undoing, because evil will be so blatant and evident. It is the good thing that will be the most difficult to discern, unless your discernment has been strengthened by the exercise thereof. Is good good enough? Good is going to be our downfall unless we have a priestly jealousy for that which is perfect.

Has God changed, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, who said that His priests must mount a ramp and not go up by steps? Do you know that? That is in Exodus chapter 20, verse 26. He did not allow His priests to step up to the place of ministry by steps, but only by a ramp. You may say, "Now that is a peculiar requirement. Why did He give that command?" Because in lifting your leg to go from one step to another, there might be a slight possibility of revealing your flesh. The ramp was the more secure provision that no flesh be revealed in God's presence. If that is not the God who is God now, then shoot me and put me out of my misery. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. It is only we who have changed.

"On man's flesh," God says of the holy anointing oil, **"it shall not be poured. Neither shall you make any other like it"** (Ex. 30:32). Be careful not to counterfeit this. Do not fabricate; do not turn up your amplifiers; do not psyche up; do not

use hype; do not "create" a particular atmosphere; do not make any other like it. Wait for the holy anointing oil, for God will anoint what He appoints, and not what we establish for our own satisfaction, or enjoyment, or assurance, of a good service. Oh, be jealous for the holy thing, the holy anointing oil. It makes all the difference because it is life-giving. Let us not make any other like it. **"And upon man's flesh, it shall not be poured."** Do you know that in the Welsh revival, they would not even allow musical instruments? Have you read Watchman Nee's book, *The Latent Power of the Soul*? Find a copy and study it. In the 1920s, he warns us about the use of musical instruments, how they have the power to bring deception, and that was before the advent of amplifiers and our musical technology. Today, you not only hear the music; you have to feel it.

There is one movement in England, a house church movement, that beats sticks on the floor to create a kind of an atmosphere, and they say that that is communicating Jesus. I am almost afraid we have crossed the point of no return already. Maybe what God is wanting—and I am happy for the gray heads in this room—is for us to pray for the lamentable condition of the Church, that it is even susceptible to the kinds of things that are now taking place. Talk about dancing around a golden calf! A whole generation is being raised up that has never known the holiness of God. We talk about God prolifically, loosely, glibly, and easily, but which God? I am wondering if these central personalities have even made a covenant with someone other than God and do not even know it themselves, and in some Faustian way are receiving a power to affect bodies and lives that they thought was coming from God. Their own knowledge of God is so sparse and so utterly questionable that it may well be that they have been covenanting with some other thing that parades as "light" and that responded to their cry for something to happen—and they really think that they are communicating with God.

I will end with this—my heart goes out to you for having to hear me! It was not too long ago in a church much like this that the thought came to me that you do not have to be a Mormon or a Jehovah's Witness, or subscribe to some sect or some cult to be deceived. You can subscribe to correct Christian orthodoxy and be as effectually deceived in the correctness of that credal statement as if you were embracing false doctrine. In fact, that kind of deception is the most devious and powerful of all because you think yourself correct. There is a need to know God, saints, a desperate need to know God, and He is waiting to be sought. He distinguishes that people, that generation that will ascend the holy hill of Zion, in Psalm 24, with clean hands and a pure heart, who have not given their souls to vanity by running to Toronto. But they are those who will ascend the holy hill and throw the bolt that opens the gate that the King of Glory might come in. He says, **"This is the generation of them that seek Thee, that seek Thy face, O God of Jacob"** (Ps. 24:6).

You do not have to go to Toronto to seek Him. Make room right here where you are. Be ruthless against yourself in finding time, in sending the kids out, in getting away those clamoring, legitimate things that are always clawing at you. Lock yourself in a room; throw the key away; do something! Seek God and be found of Him. That is His promise: **"If you will seek for Me with all your heart and all your soul, you shall be found of Me"** (Deut. 4:29). When you do obtain that knowledge, maintain it, or else you will lose it. Let us pray for the Church of Australia. In this critical hour, deception is rampant. My Jewish people are perishing. Where is that witness that moves them to jealousy? Jews are everywhere about us, totally unimpressed with our best charismatic demonstration. They need to come into a place that is holy, holy, holy, that knows God as He is, and not as men think Him to be.

Lord Jesus, Precious God, Holy One, our hearts go out to You, Lord. We apologize for the way You have been slurred, for the blasphemy that takes place everywhere, not by the worldlings, but by Your supposed ministers. The use of Your name, the exploitation, the employment of Your name to sanctify cheap carnival things. Lord, forgive us for going along with it. We have paid for it, we have underwritten it and have not been jealous for Your name and Your honor, for Your person. We have to confess that we ourselves don't know You as we ought. We have not been diligent to know You and to seek You, and to retain that knowledge, and to be jealous over it, and be willing, like Paul, to know You in the fellowship of Your sufferings. We have preferred guarded, private lives. Though we have sung the brave choruses, the real testimony of our hearts seems to be, "this far and no further." We don't want to "go all the way." That is too fanatical, upsetting and threatening. We want a measured Christian life, singing the choruses bravely, but having no intention of doing it. Lord, we ask Your forgiveness. It's not true: it's a posture. It's an appearance of something that is not, and we enjoy that appearance, and we even have persuaded ourselves that it's true of us. Lord, help us! Help us in Your mercy and Your great love for the Church that was birthed out of Your bleeding side. Wash us with the water of Your Word. Grant us, my God, the gift of repentance. If we don't need it for ourselves, may we repent for the Church in our identification with it. Come, Lord; stir our hearts. Hold us accountable for what we are hearing this morning. May we be of that generation that seeks You, that seeks Your Face, O God of Jacob. This is our prayer, in Yeshua's holy name. Amen.

Re: Holiness or Blessing? (audio transcript) - posted by RebeccaRuth (), on: 2004/3/28 9:35

What a powerfully convicting message!! I had never heard of Art Katz before, but after I received the newsletter today, I read this text version. We desperately need more ministers of truth and righteousness in the pulpit today! I personally only know of one who is completely sold out to the Word of God! I pray more arise to simply speak the truth without fear of man or compromise.

Thank you so much for making this available in text format! I am now going to download the message in audio.

Greg, may God bless you abundantly for your tireless efforts to spread the Truth!

Re: art katz - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2004/3/28 10:45

Quote:
-----What a powerfully convicting message!! I had never heard of Art Katz before, but after I received the newsletter today, I read this text version. We desperately need more ministers of truth and righteousness in the pulpit today!

Amen! Art definitely has a powerful anointing to minister truth and righteousness. The Lord has done some wonderful heart work in me through this man. He has a number of great sermons on this site for download; In particular I can recommend the following messages from Art Katz:

(<https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/visit.php?lid3381>) A Call to The Church (The Spirit of Truth) Part 1

(<https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/visit.php?lid3380>) A Call to The Church (The Spirit of Truth) Part 2

(<https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/visit.php?lid2761>) Be Ye Perfect

In Christ,

Ron

Re: - posted by RebeccaRuth (), on: 2004/3/28 20:28

Thank you, Ron. Those sound like wonderful messages! I'll listen to them as soon as I can.

Re: Holiness or "blessing" - posted by DezCall (), on: 2005/6/28 7:57

Some time ago I listened to this sermon by Art Katz. I think this is a message that we as Christians need to hear today. We live in a time where Christianity itself focuses more on experience and feelings than ever. Christianity more and more becomes a self-centred religion instead of a Christ-centred reality. More than ever we need to stick to God's word and seek His face with all diligence. May these following words speak to your heart (and they're not all "nice and fine"). Be encouraged. Be confronted. Be blessed... Holiness or "blessing" Art Katz ...some quotes... "With the pure Thou dost show Thyself pure." If you have any kind of controversy with God this morning, the problem is not with Him, but yourself. You are projecting something on Him. You are becoming guilty of Israel's sin. "You thought that I was such a one as you are." The thing that we need is to be transformed into His image, and not to project our image on Him. He is not a convenience. He is God! He is the Creator. He is the Almighty. "Therefore, thus says the Lord, if you return, then I will rest on you. Before me you will stand. And if you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become my spokesman." (Jeremiah 15:19). I think other versions read, "If you remove the sacred from the profane or the vile, then you will become my spokesman." I think we need to be about this. There needs to be a separation. We need to disengage ourselves from

om the things that are profane, because the whole world is profane. There is a process of profanation taking place every where. There is something that is cheapening and degrading in television, in language, in street conversation. It is not worth it to find out what is going on in the world if that is the price we have to pay, having our own spirits being made sodden and dulled. There is a lot of mixing going on, and we have not been careful to separate the precious from the vile. "Then you will become My spokesman." Oh, praise God! When is the last time you have heard one? We hear a lot of preaching, a lot of words, but a spokesman is one who bears the message and the burden of the Lord. I think there is a famine already in the land for the hearing of the Word of God. In the midst of the welter of cassettes, video and ministries that are profuse, where are the spokesmen of the Lord? This is their requirement: to separate the cheap, the trivial, the trite, the commonplace, from the things that are holy and the things that are sacred, lest the holy thing itself becomes swamped and trivialized. What hope is there, dear saints, if God should become trivialized? What hope for anything? What standard for anything? To what shall the world look to if there is no standard in the Church? That is exactly the thing that is profane: the employment of the name of God to somehow validate the human and religious thing that we are promoting. I am not knocking blessings; some may authentically be receiving. But our point is that if they can succeed in bringing the Church to viewing benefit as the determinant by which something is judged to be of God, we may well have been brought to the very ground of deception itself. Is that all it takes to persuade you, that you receive a benefit, or a blessing, or a release from some personality disorder? Is that all it takes? Satan is well able to counterfeit and provide that. There is something more important than benefits. There is something more important than release. It is the holiness of God. It is His name. It is His honor. It is who He is in Himself. A benefit of a dubious kind is too high a price to pay if it is going to throw any shadow upon His great name. We will have lost everything in the name of benefit, if even the desire for benefit is suspect. I have often been astonished when the appeals for healing come. Almost everyone comes out of their seat. I have never seen such a sick church everywhere, and I think we will continue to be sick so long as we live egocentric lives; even spiritually speaking. What will be the first statement or question you raise when you leave this room this morning? "What did you think of the speaker? Did you like? Did you like?" Is not your liking the center of your being? So, you have shifted from carnal centrality to spiritual centrality, but you are still the center. No wonder you are sick. No wonder you need continually to be healed. Until we make God the center—His glory, His honor, His name, and His eternal purposes—we will continue to be sick. That is why we are sick. We have a false center, and it is in ourselves, in our fellows, in our denomination; we say our, our, our, mine, mine, mine. There is no such thing as coming out the same. You are either going to suffer loss or obtain gain. Do you know God in the kind of knowledge that has to do with His sufferings? It is the kind of knowledge that comes through trials, through being stretched and broken, and through dealings that many would shut themselves off from because they are painful. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are all the issues of life" (Pr. 4:23). You say, "Brother, the way you talk and carry on, is there time enough for that kind of Christian living? You make it sound like a full-time occupation. I only have time on Sunday for an hour or two, and I might even come to a mid-week service, but the way you're talking about maintaining your spirit and guarding yourself, and growing in the nurture and the faith, and all these obligations, you make it sound like that's the whole purpose of our being." Exactly. Exactly. What did you think Church was; a Sunday supplement? Hey, we are coming to the end of the age. God has great purposes to consummate through a Church that knows Him, and will do great exploits out of that knowledge, and that knowledge is not cheap. True church is a suffering before it is a glory. I may not be much, but I am jealous for the preaching of the Word of God, and when I see a phenomenon touted as revival, where the Word of God is conspicuously absent and denigrated as not being the source of God's greatest blessing, but experience has replaced it, my alarm goes off instantly; and yours ought to as well. The Church needs to be stirred up, saints. We need to be called to maturity. If we are not able to recognize the false prophets now, then how will we recognize the greater deceptions that are to come? There will be wonders. There will be miracles. There will be demonstrations of power. They will be beneficial, but they will be lying signs and wonders. If we are only concerned with the benefit and not all that much with the source, then will we discern it? I want to tell you that it is the things that are good that are most likely to trap us. Lock yourself in a room; throw the key away; do something! Seek God and be found of Him. That is His promise: "If you will seek for Me with all your heart and all your soul, you shall be found of Me" (Deut. 4:29). When you do obtain that knowledge, maintain it, or else you will lose it. Humility is the key to the Kingdom. Though we have sung the brave choruses, the real testimony of our hearts seems to be, "this far and no further." We don't want to "go all the way." That is too fanatical, upsetting and threatening. We want a measured Christian life, singing the choruses bravely, but having no intention of doing it. Lord, we ask Your forgiveness.