

Christus Victor!

by Art Katz

Jesus' victory over the devil is the principal object of his coming, and the church's demonstration of God's wisdom is the key to defeating the powers of the air.

Duration: 1:04:50

Scripture: Ephesians 1:1, Ephesians 3:8-10

Topics: "Cross of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of privacy violation and the influence of demonic powers in society. The speaker emphasizes the need for Christians to discern and oppose these powers, as they are the gods of this world. The power of these forces is effectively broken through the victory of Jesus on the cross, but they have still managed to manipulate and intimidate mankind for centuries. The speaker encourages believers to live with confidence and freedom, knowing that their lives are in God's hands and that they can overcome the darkness through faith in Jesus.

Transcript

Christus victor. Ever heard that phrase? It's passed out of currency. Christus victor.

It means Jesus is the victor over the devil. The church of the early church celebrated that as being the principal object of his coming to destroy the works of the devil. That emphasis has been lost to us in modern times.

There are other aspects that have been celebrated. The personal salvation out of hell to heaven has displaced the consideration of what was obtained at the cross that disarmed the principalities and powers of the air and made of them an open spectacle. But the church living in an earlier time where spirits were manifest and evil recognized the significance of Jesus's triumph against them.

Now have these spirits dissipated away? Or is their activity more covert and hidden rather than open and blatant as it was in ancient times? In fact, are they not now more sinister for exactly that reason? But they yet remain. He disarmed them, but he did not extinguish them. He even allowed their continuation for they serve functions in the purpose of God, not the least of which is to test the church, to try it, and to afflict it, so as to bring us into depths of faith and trust and prayer that we would not otherwise have sought or found necessary.

That's my burden for tonight. We've heard of the cosmic description of the faith. Now the cosmic task of the faith is to complete what Jesus initiated in the defeat that was inflicted at the cross against the powers.

He disarmed them, but he did not extinguish them. The final conclusion is what we bring to those same powers by the demonstration of the same kind of what was wrought at the cross needs again at the end of the age to be demonstrated by his corporate body. So Lord, I see already looks of perplexity and raised eyebrows, so bring those eyebrows down and give an understanding of the critical area that has suffered neglect and that must be restored to the church, especially the church of the last days, to complete what you have begun.

Give us a comprehension of the influence of these powers as they affect society, institutions, and the church, their subtlety that we might discern, recognize, and oppose them, for they are the gods of this world. And we thank you, my God, this is your burden and theme for tonight. Bring it forth as the one who inflicted that defeat and give us an understanding that will complete it.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Art, how did this subject come to your attention? In a hospital where I was brought by brethren after I was waiting on God for the miracle that would heal my shattered knee because I had slipped on the YMCA tile floor having baptized 12 Lutherans in their swimming pool and on my way to the locker one little puddle and the last thing I remember I was up in the air doing a somersault with my Bible in my hand saying to myself, cats, what are you doing here? Knowing that I do not suffer accidents and down I came, vroom, on my kneecap and my leg will let, I spoke that night in that condition, may God's man of faith and power, but the next day it had swollen like a football and the brethren insisted that I go to a orthopedic surgeon at the local hospital who happened to be Jewish. And he was showing me my x-rays, he said, Mr. Katz, he said, you have not fractured, you have shattered your kneecap and there must be an operation where it is wired together.

I said, good, okay. Well, we can't do this until Thursday. I said, what? Wednesday I have to be in northern Minnesota where the Lord is giving us a property.

He said, the who? And that's how it began. How far God will go to witness to a Jew. So he had his hand on my kneecap and he said, something is happening.

I can feel the pieces coming into place. If I put you in a cast right now, you needn't have an operation. I said, praise God, do it.

Put me in a cast. So there I was that night in the hospital bed with my leg up in the cast and the nurse comes with the hypodermic needle. I said, I don't need that.

Oh, she said, you must have that. I said, you don't understand, I'm not in agonizing pain. I don't need to be sedated.

I don't want to have my consciousness dulled by drugs. And I can bear this very modest discomfort. But you must have it, she said.

I said, I will not have it. She thought I was afraid of needles. Hey, I was in the U.S. Army and I walked through corridors with men on both sides poised with bent needles that men fainted away.

And I was pricked like a pincushion and I don't live in my flesh. I don't feel pain that intensely. And you'll not suffer it either if you don't become preoccupied with the needle pricking your flesh.

You can be pricked and it's nothing if you don't center your life in your flesh. And so I refused to have the needle. And I started a crisis in the hospital.

And she went and she came back with pills or tablets. I said, you don't understand. It's not the issue of a needle.

I refuse to be doped up. I don't want to be drugged. I can bear this minor discomfort.

You have to have this. And the last thing I remember, two doctors and two nurses in my doorway foaming at the mouth over the crisis I had precipitated by my unwillingness to be drugged. And all of a sudden I understood that I had unconsciously touched an unspoken premise by which the world lives its life, the avoidance of pain and the pursuit of pleasure.

And that this is fixed right into the institutions of life as an uncontested and unchallenged premise by which the world lives its life, which is a lie. And that was my introduction to the realm of the principalities and the powers of the air, who are the controlling influences over the lives of men in nations and cities by their influence, especially in the realm of institutions, in a way that is never recognized, let alone challenged. And therefore they have undisputed sway in really calling the shots that influence the way in which men live their life in the world in fear, intimidation, threat, and insecurity.

They're manipulated, they're jerked, they're seduced, they're goaded, they're provoked. It's a lie. It's not living.

It's death. So how is it that they have gone unrecognized, unchallenged, uncontested? Because there's only one agency in the earth called by God, both to discern and recognize this evil and to challenge it. It's the church.

And if we do not blow the whistle, then the whole world remains duped and under the influence of these powers. Our silence condemns men. But it's more than blowing the whistle.

It's more than just sounding an alarm. It's the testimony of a church which lives free from the influence of these powers, that such a church is itself the testimony against them, and frees even the locality where such a church is from the influence that would otherwise fall on hapless victims. But to be freed from that influence means to be freed from fear, free from intimidation, free from threat, free from manipulation, which means that the church of all institutions must not itself engage in manipulation.

So if we perform hype, if we put on an act, if we appeal to the heart strings, in order to evoke a response at the altar which is manipulative, we have played the game of the powers of the air. That's why they can say, Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are you? We're not in any way obliged even to recognize you, for you constitute no threat. You are evidently under our influence and playing our game, exerting pressure, manipulation.

So to be free of that, it means to be free of that from the platform. It means to be free of that from the bedroom, wherever manipulation raises its ugly head, like a wife pouting, or maybe more likely a husband pouting, who has been deprived, and lets his wife know it, or exerts influences so as to affect a response that is manipulation. The powers will never accede to us, or recognize us, let alone be dispersed by us, so long as we compromise and play their game in any way.

We have to be totally free from their influence. Now this is not a minor theme, it is the major theme and the task of the church, and Paul speaks of it as the great apostle in Ephesians chapter 3, who has been entrusted with these great themes, and you can, you know how difficult it is to break into Paul, have you noticed? You want to start with a certain scripture, but you can't, you've got to begin with two verses before that, and then before you know it, you're up to Ephesians chapter 1 verse 1. You cannot break in, Paul is an unbroken continuum, he rolls it out by the yard. So I feel like somewhat rude to break in like this, where Paul describes himself as the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles who have heard of the dispensation of the grace which was given him for the church, the revelation made known to me of the mysteries which you may understand of my knowledge of the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

And that's why until we have communication through holy apostles and prophets, we ourselves are lost to these mysteries. They must come through foundational men who are the guardians or the stewards of the mysteries of God, who like Paul see themselves as the least of all saints, is this privilege given. And what is the mystery that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel? Oh, I wish we could stop right there and center in this, because the prominent mystery that has been concealed from the ages and now is being revealed that Gentiles have been allowed in to the fellowship of faith and to be partakers of the promise with Israel by the gospel through Christ.

Wow! Do you know how stunning, how astonishing and innovation this is? Don't you remember how Peter required a trance before he would allow himself even to come into the house of the Gentile? For salvation is of the Jews. You guys got it all cockeyed and backward. You think salvation is of the church and the Jews are a johnny-come-lately.

No, you're the johnny-come-lately. You're the one that the grace of God has permitted entry into the household of God to have fellowship with the already existing saints and the already existing body. That's a mystery that heretofore has not been known.

And it's a remarkable innovation that stunned the early church that Peter had to bring back a report. The Holy Spirit fell on the goyim, fell on Romans. Wow, I was yet talking.

Well, how can we deny them baptism on water seeing that God has given them the same gift he's given us? They began to dawn on them that the advent of their Messiah was more glorious than they had assumed and that this salvation which was exclusively Israel's, the Gentiles were out of it. They drink beer from skulls. They fornicate.

They're unclean. They're not even circumcised. That they now are also to be included in the salvation of God.

And the two that have been in ages-long enmity, one with the other, are now to become one new man in Christ. Wow, that's a stunning revelation. But I don't think that the church appreciates it.

I don't think it's aware of the grace that has come that was exclusively Israel's and now has been extended also to you. I don't see your gratitude. And so I was made of this minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power unto me who am less than the least of all saints.

And Paul is not being a salesman in some self-effacing false modesty. The man really believes he's the least of all saints. And because he believes that, he's the greatest of all apostles.

Because he really believes that, God can entrust him with mystery and revelation that will otherwise corrupt men who think themselves something. Paul knew he's the least, really knew it. So that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and here we come now to our thing.

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world has been hidden God who created all things by Jesus Christ to the intent that now or in order that now. And we have to stop right there. We dare not read on beyond that point until we have caught our breath and gasp because we now are going to hear from the great apostle the purpose for which God has created all things.

Are you curious? Or do you know? Or it never occurred to you to ask that God is a purposeful creator. This is not our playground. This is the world that God has created.

Its geography, its proportions, its races are all an expression of the divine genius that has purpose and end to the everlasting praise of his glory. And now the apostle is going to tell us why. The essential reason for the creation of all things by Jesus Christ in order that now, this is going to floor you, unto the principalities and powers and heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

Who understands that? How many Christians have read through that and were totally unaffected and dismissed it as a kind of oratorical flourish, a kind of poetic sweep that is common for Paul but not to be taken seriously. I tell you dear saints, there is nothing more to be taken seriously than this. To take this apart and to realize that everything was created for the church, for something for the church, just that one knowledge alone ought to destroy every last lingering inferiority complex that the church has about itself as being some kind of secondary thing or an addendum to the world.

The world is for the church, not for society, not for civilization, not for universities, not for business, not for Microsoft, not for electronics or gimmicks. The world is for the church. Everything else is incidental and secondary.

But for the church, for what purpose? That through the church a demonstration might be made that only the church can make, when it is the church, to the principalities and powers of the air, the rulers of darkness and heavenly places. That's the purpose for creation. What do you say about that? It has nothing to do with improving the world, improving mankind, blessing, advantage, benefit.

It has to do with only something that is important to God alone. He wants this, and he thinks it's important enough that it's not too extravagant to create a whole world in order that it could be a platform for a church that is called to make a demonstration to some invisible spectral realm that presides in the heavenlies over the nations, that only the church itself can make, and that this is not only the purpose, but the eternal purpose of God, the next verse says, in Christ Jesus. So show me a church that has ignored this and has not taken it to heart as the foremost purpose for its being, and I'll show you a flunky, counterfeit, secondary, weak, inept cultural phenomenon that will be judged by Islam, that will run over it like a tide.

The church that will not take God's eternal purpose to itself as the foremost reason for its being, though this purpose has no ostensible benefit for itself, is ipso facto not the church in any apostolic sense of the word. How dare we call ourselves the church and sing, to him be the glory, and we have not even been

occupied with or aware that there's a purpose for which God has created all things, to which we are entirely ignorant or indifferent. This is how God gains His glory.

It raises all kinds of great questions. Who are these powers? Why is it important to God that a certain demonstration be made? What is that demonstration? What is the manifold wisdom of God? And why is the church the only entity in the earth that can make that demonstration? Which it will never make if it's ignorant of its call. This is the church's cosmic call.

This is ultimate fulfillment. This requires everything. This contradicts everything.

Because it has no benefit for those who take this purpose to themselves. It only benefits God. And any church that will put His benefit before their own is already demonstrating the manifold wisdom of God.

Because this wisdom is in opposition to the wisdom of the world. And that wisdom comes from below. That wisdom is rooted in selfishness.

Take care of number one. Gratification, power, prestige, wealth, force, violence, threat, intimidation. That's the wisdom of this world, of the gods of this world that have tyrannized men and jerked and manipulated them like puppets on strings.

Because it is self-evident that the purpose for your existence is yourself. Take care of number one. If you have a little time over, if you can put a dollar in a collection plate, great.

But the unchallenged premise that all the world shares, and the church too, is that we are the principal object and purpose and our satisfaction, our enjoyment. So a church that will dismiss those considerations and say our first purpose is God's satisfaction and not our own, is already evidencing another wisdom. Because you receive no benefit for taking this purpose to yourself.

On the contrary, you open yourself to a new kind of opposition from the very powers of darkness. They're now scared. They're now anxious that you are moving out of their orbit of human self-interest where they have a field day and are coming into a place of God where self-interest is not your first and primary concern, if it is at all your concern.

Rather, your concern is totally unnatural. You're putting God's purpose before your own without any benefit to be obtained and even at the point of making yourself an object of attack by those very same powers. And the powers of the air cannot fathom that.

So can you see that when the church will put the interest of the Jew and Israel before itself in the last days, even at the risk or cost of its own suffering and life, in that one act it fulfills the wisdom of God that forever destroys the powers of the air. Why does it destroy them, Art? Because they have nothing that they can use. There's no string they can pull.

You have nothing that they can play upon. You're free from fear. I mean, if you're willing to lay down your life, how can you be manipulated? What are they going to tell you if you're not afraid of dying? That they have nothing to play upon because they have been disarmed.

All they can do is growl. All they can do is manipulate. But their power is effectively broken.

But they have succeeded even with that for centuries in tyrannizing mankind just by threat, intimidation, and fear, who are afraid for their earthly and mortal life. Then the powers of the air can run riot. But if

you're no longer afraid, if you've decided at the issue that your life is not your own, and the mere physical continuum of your bodily life is no big deal, that in fact you have a sublime confidence that your days are numbered of the Lord, and your every hair is numbered, and you can say to the powers of the darkness, as Jesus said to Pontius Pilate, You could do nothing against me except that we're giving you from above.

Now do you understand the freedom with which I walk in the world? I'm a giant in the world of pygmies. I'm not intimidated by anything. I don't care what I'm standing before, the academic world and all its prestige, or men of wealth, or the Mercedes-Benz with the 12 cylinders that picked us up and drove us to and from the airport.

It doesn't matter whether it's a rickshaw or a Mercedes. There's a wonderful freedom when you've decided the issue that your life is not your own, that the length of days is determined by God and its purpose, and you cannot be threatened or intimidated. The powers of the air have no possible influence over you.

Can you imagine a whole church like that? Mamma Mia! When the powers see a church like that, they are broken out of their orbit in the area that they have dominated of that locality. Someone has wisely said, the church is spinning its wheels and boxing at the air with its programs and evangelizations until it has rightly dealt with the ruling principalities and powers over its own locality. And they're not going to be defeated by turning up the amplifiers, or that we're taking cities with Jesus through militant worship.

What else is new? But let them see a whole congregation freed from the influence of the powers, not living in intimidation or threat or insecurity about its future, its finance, or anything. Trusting God in sublime shalom. That defeats them.

So the wisdom of the world is predicated upon man's self-interest. And look at Israel today, talking to the Palestinians, appealing to their self-interest to the Arab nations. Hey, why don't you guys give up your violence? Tell you what, you can share in our prosperity.

And this will be the Hong Kong of the Middle East. Your standard of living will zoom. If only you put away your bomb attempts and get with it.

We can share in this prosperity. I'm appealing to your self-interest and your rational self-interest. And it goes right over the heads of an Islamic, perversely corrupted people who don't give a rap about prosperity or sharing in it, but want to ventilate spite and vicious desire for the annihilation of the enemy whose very presence is an offense to Allah.

Leave it to the Lord to bring us as Jews to a predicament that we cannot solve on the basis of appealing to man's self-interest. This is a new ballgame. This enemy is representing a spirit of another kind that is not amenable to rational discourse or appeals.

They don't know that, but we know that. Well, this is a classic first book into this realm of the principalities and powers of the air, written by a Dutch theologian, now passed on to be with the Lord, Hendrik Burckhoff. See if you can get it.

It's published by the Mennonite publishing houses in America. It may be out of print, but it's a heroic, pioneer effort to begin to examine a realm of subject that the Church had dismissed as being old wives' tales. That Paul's references to the principalities and powers of the air was a rabbinic hang-up over hobgoblins and witches, and we're a rational civilization since the Enlightenment, and there's no place for that consideration in our Christianity.

Until World War II. And the same Karl Barth, to whom this manuscript was first sent, my favorite German theologian, dismissed it until World War II, because World War II brought the revelation of the powers of the air, not just as an influence over Germany, but as powers that had captivated the entire nation and taken over the whole rudiments of society and used it in the fulfillment of their wisdom and requirement to annihilate world Jews and bring the world into chaos and devastation. No more was this old wives' tales.

Now we saw the principalities as powers that are not content merely to influence, but are capable of dominating an entire society and civilization. Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Fichte, Nietzsche, great philosophers, learning, music. And if the powers can take that over in the space of a decade and take the gutter elements of society, the homosexuals and the occultists, and put them in the place of predominant power, what hope is there for Australia or the USA? And the time of Antichrist and the persecution of Jews will be exactly that.

These powers will be loosed over the nations and will sweep through, breaking down traditional concepts of civility and law and open the way for persecution and annihilation globally. So let me read a few of his insights. What destroyed, what was the factual defeat? Why did the early church use the phrase Christus Victor? What was performed at the cross was a decisive beginning of the end for these powers.

That's why Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, I think it is, if the powers of this world knew, they would not have crucified the Son of Glory. They thought they were getting rid of the problem by ventilating their wisdom upon their hapless victim, which was violence, threat, intimidation unto death. But he bore it in such a way and revealed God in such a way in that grace that it defeated them and the resurrection that resulted in the Father's approval of that sacrifice unto death set in motion the church and the reality of God that makes their end inevitable and final.

When Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead, this saving event, wherever the saving event is proclaimed, the domination of the world powers is at an end. Of course I hate to improve upon any Dutch theologian, but I would say wherever the saving event is not so much proclaimed as demonstrated, the domination of the world powers is at an end. That is to say, it's not enough for us that our salvation should be merely phraseological or doctrinal, but actual.

And what kind of saving, what kind of salvation, not just the assurance of a place in heaven when we die, but a complete liberation from the forces of darkness in this present life. Wherever that is demonstrated, the cross is reiterated. The power of the cross and the powers of darkness shrink and recoil.

They dread the cross if it's more than just a piece of jewelry or decoration. Where they see the reality of the cross, they are reminded of the defeat that they suffered there and the power remains of the cross that yet inflicts a further defeat. So, for example, preaching.

If preaching is only a demonstration of human ability and a gift of words, however biblical or clever or interesting it might be, it constitutes nothing against the realm of darkness. But where there's an issue of the cross being expressed, where the preaching of the word is an issue of suffering or the willingness to risk loss of prestige or recognition of men and take the risk of faith and trust. In that instance, preaching becomes a demonstration of the cross.

So, for example, I was in a seminary for two years and there was a daily chapel. I don't remember one message. And they were all biblical.

How come? Because these faculty members knew months in advance the date in which they would be the chapel speaker. And they were prepared to the teeth. They had a message that was airtight.

They examined every theological aspect. They read it in the original languages so that when they spoke, they knew that they were making a statement that could not be critiqued or challenged in any way as lacking in scholarship by the faculty or students. But it was not an expression of faith.

It was not a trust. There was no room for God. It was spoken and prepared to impress men rather than to glorify God.

But if there had been one man who had just come and the Lord had given him only a slight disposition of a theme and he has standing before men to choke and splutter and trust God in the bringing of it forth, that is the demonstration of the cross. That would have inflicted a defeat in the seminary. For where are the powers of the air more prominent than in religious institutions and are rarely recognized, let alone defeated, because there's so little expression of the cross in the religious realm? Got the idea? So the cross unmasks these false gods.

What does that mean they have become the gods of this world? Why do they have an influence? Because the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable and without repentance. They are part of God's creation. He has established them as supra human angelic entities in the realm that pervades over the earth called the air.

And they were given in order to exert a benevolent influence upon mankind and and dispose men toward God. But when there was a rebellion in heaven and Satan swept a third of them with him, they still maintained their governmental posts, but they did not use it for God so much as against God. They became the gods of this world.

And so you can see their panoply of gods, rock and roll singers, musicians, athletes that are getting salaries and rewards that are astronomic. In baseball, these men are getting \$25 million contracts that someone computed. One pitch is \$50,000.

It's out of the realm of sanity and of value. So have there been a whole panoply of gods of sport, music, culture that have gained the admiration of the world and especially of the younger generation to seduce them to have images of ambitions of like kind. Corrupt, passing, failing, momentary.

Because the powers want to take the things of God that are eternal and absolute and turn them into that which is passing and transient for mankind. And take that which is passing and transient and make that absolute. They are about a complete value reversal.

And they're succeeding like gangbusters. So that kids are panting after these musicians, after these sport figures, after the rewards, a whole unreality has been created and presses to be received as being not only reality but definitive reality. That eclipses and minimizes and brings to nothing any other competing reality, even God himself.

They are the gods of this world and they have won our youth. What movie was it that this Jewish were always the ones who create them? Was it Star Wars? Something with these grotesque figures. George, somebody help me, that's his first name.

Lucas. Lucas, George Lucas and his latest film where I wrote a letter to the editor of our local newspaper. I registered a protest.

I could not remain silent. Because if I went into a supermarket, there was some lurking seven foot high cut out of one of the ghoulish characters from this film promoting Pepsi Cola. Pepsi Cola paid 25 million dollars for the right to use this movie's name and title in order to promote its stuff.

Every can had another image and the kids had to collect every can. And so I wrote a letter, I said, I protest that my privacy is being violated. Not only am I, if I refuse to go to see the film, the film haunts me.

And I can't even buy a piece of bread or a box of tissues without seeing these looming figures brooding over me and projecting their vile demonic influence. And I said to the Christian parents, your children slept outside the theater so that when the doors opened at 6 a.m. they would be the first online and the first in all night in sleeping bags outside the theater. When did they ever do that outside the door of the church? The gods of this world seducing, raping, arresting a whole generation.

And the church is impotent, not even recognizing that in this culture are these devious spirit powers. Because you can't even understand merchandising and advertising, let alone films and music, without understanding a sinister and evil supernatural power working in them. They're just, these men are not that bright.

There's something working in and through them that is much wiser than man himself. It's the wiles of the enemy. That even to go into a supermarket, you need to brace yourself for the power of the display of merchandise so stacked up in great quantities as to induce your purchase.

Principles of psychology, it's honed now to the finest degree, is unqualified the influence of the supernatural powers of the air coming into commerce, into products, into film, into culture, into the world. Into the church. So that we play their music.

Using our lyrics, but their beat. And they love that. They love to triumph over Christ's people.

And that's why when they catch any of us, it's not just putting us in prison or subjecting us to harassment, but to vile torture of an excruciating kind in order to get us to say uncle, to give up the faith, to forfeit, to disavow the Lord. There's a vendetta to negate God as God, even in God's people. These are active saints, full of deception.

They are the liars, the father of lies. And the cross has disarmed them wherever it is preached. The unmasking and the disarming of the powers take place.

They are defeated by being unmasked. By showing the church and the world what it is that's behind the scenes, that is hidden and covert, that is exerting this influence. To identify them is to defeat them.

So the church, by her very presence, he writes, breaks through the unshakable stability of life under the powers. The church is made up of men and women who see through the deception of the powers, refusing to run after isms, I would say after fads, after novelties, after the latest movie or heroine or culture hero. Look at that book, Harry Potter.

Harry Potter? I've not read it, but I know that it is an astronomical success. This woman is rolling, not in millions, but in billions. And once they hit a theme, then there's a sequel.

Then there's book 2, book 3, book 4, or Star Trek 1, Star Trek 2. You're inundated with swimming in it. It's choking. So for a church that will see through, recognize the intrinsic evil, and who raised the question, as I did about the needle when I had a shattered kneecap, that that raising of the question is already putting the spirits of darkness to flight.

The church has got to blow the whistle and raise the question about the unchallenged and uncontested premises by which the world lives its life that has its origin not from above, but from below. That the very existence of a church that can raise the question, is this legitimate? Something is grotesquely wrong that astronomical sums are being paid to athletes. It destroys a whole value system that such sums should be lavished on men because they can throw a ball.

Whether they are worth it because of what they bring into the coffers by their presence is not the question. What is it doing to the whole realm of values when extravagant incomes are being obtained in sport? What is the sense of what is real and what is valuable? So for example, will you understand me? When I was in East Germany, while the wall was still up years ago, and below were six or seven elders waiting for me to come down from my attic and bring a final word. And the word that I brought down was, You have an obligation as leaders of the church to go to the communist authorities of your community and register a complaint and protest against their propaganda campaign.

Which is ubiquitous, which means to say, everywhere. Train stations, platforms, posters, everywhere. 45 years of Soviet-German friendship, it's a lie.

The highest rate of alcoholism in the world at that time was East Germany. Because God has not made mankind to live in a lie. And they have to dope themselves up and stupefy themselves when they're living in an environment like that everywhere.

I said, you have to stand for what is made in God's image. But aren't they not going to hear us? I said, I know that. We'll not succeed, I know that.

It'll probably throw us in jail, I know that. But that's not the issue of whether you succeed, but your silence will condemn you. That's the church.

And what was my last word in Sicily? When the elders were waiting, and the Lord waked me, I don't know at what time of the hour, and I grabbed a piece of paper and a pen, and wrote down seven things for the church of Sicily. And number one, the next morning when I shared with them, was, oppose the mafia. Because the mafia has rendered Italy a second-class nation.

It has robbed you of your integrity. The entire nation lives in fear for physical, violent reprisals if you don't go along, play the game, pay graft, corrupt politicians. There needs to be somebody in the nation who will not be intimidated by the fear of violence or death.

And when somebody like that will stand before the mafia, knowing that nothing can come upon me except that which the Lord allows, they are defeated and broken, for the mafia are only the visible human forefront of the secret and covert powers that are operating through them. Somebody has got to blow the whistle by their example and by their courage, and save Italy from becoming a second-class nation that was the land of the Renaissance and Michelangelo and the great giants of culture. And now what is it? So I've had two personal occasions.

Well, I'll give you another one, right in our own community in Minnesota, where I came to the morning prayer meeting and I was feeling oppressed and hungover. You know the way we wake up sometimes like that? But the remarkable thing was, everyone in the prayer room felt exactly the same thing. That's the advantage of community.

Otherwise, you think that this is just a subjective, personal thing. But when all the others in the community are experiencing the same, you know it's not a mood, but a power. And they said, Art, well, of course, the Indians, eight miles from us, the Chippewa tribe is having its annual powwow.

You mentioned the Lord bringing me away from New York City and two and a half million Jews, up into the boondocks of northern Minnesota, eight miles from an Indian tribe. No wonder every respected leader said, you're mad to do this. And so they said, yeah, there's a powwow and you can hear the drums at night.

And they're full of curses, they're full of anti-white prejudice and bitterness. No wonder we were feeling something in the air. And any of us who have traveled in countries of the world know that when you cross certain borders, the atmosphere changes instantly.

I remember going from West Germany to East Germany with my interpreter, whom I've known for years. He's one man in West Germany. As soon as we approach the border, he begins to tremble.

And when we cross over and go in, he's another man, afraid. Because there's something in the air. And what is in the air is the characteristic activity of these powers who are reflecting the history of that locality, of its violence, of its wars, of its bloodshed, of its injustices, that have given ground for these powers to become entrenched and to act in that way.

And so I said, hey, we need to pray. And so we were in a circle of saints and we prayed. And after five minutes, I stopped it.

I said, you call that prayer? You're too polite. This is religious prayer. It's affecting nothing.

Come on, there's a war on. Paul says, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and rules of this world's darkness. We wrestle.

And anyone who knows what wrestling is, knows that that is ultimate combat, ultimate confrontation. Something like ping pong, where you defeat your opponent, even though your skill is less than his, but by your greater determination of will, bringing everything to the success of the game. And so also wrestling is eyeball to eyeball.

It's more than muscular. It's will, it's stamina, it's determination, it's grit. We wrestle.

But there's got to be a we that wrestles. This is not a solitary, unique thing for individual virtuosos of the faith. It's the church that makes the demonstration.

It's a corporate demonstration. It's a corporate wrestle to those who are not embarrassed to be engaged in that kind of intensive warfare. And so if you had entered the room five minutes later where we were praying, you would have thought you had entered an insane asylum.

People were stretched out on their faces. Men were boxing with the air. There was every expression of people engaged in ultimate confrontation.

And as we were praying like that, I saw a face. I'm not a man given to visions. And there was a face looming over us with a smirk on its countenance like, huh, Ben Israel, big deal, full of problems, no threat.

But as the prayers intensified and continued, I watched the smirk change to trembling lips of fear because the powers are required to acknowledge one thing only, apostolic authenticity. And when that prayer continued in a depth and quality that took eight years of community life to make possible, the grimace turned from contempt to fear, and this face began to back up as our prayer pressed in. And finally it broke and ran.

And we were pursuing it in the realm of spirit. And at a certain moment, like a fist smashed through, and the thing just broke into pieces all over the place. And we stopped praying.

Nobody said stop praying. But people began to giggle, began to laugh, began to hold their chest, hold their mouth. And for us, it was the joy of triumph.

We had won a battle against the principalities of the air over our own locality because the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual. And intensive prayer cannot be generated by a congregation of individualities who are living privatistically, but has got to be the expression of a church that is together and can wrestle. So did the Lord show me the reality of these powers and how they ought to be recognized and dealt with.

Merely turning the amplifier up and increasing the number of instruments and getting people whipped up into a kind of soulless frenzy of taking cities through worship is a joke to these powers of the air. They yawn at that kind of enterprise. Because turning up amplifiers and producing noise and sound cannot be a substitute for the truth of a people who are living as a community of believers and are together and who can wrestle.

The church is unwilling for the cross that will establish that kind of relationship because community is a suffering. It took us eight years to come to a place where that kind of prayer could be performed. But what was those eight years? Disappointment.

Heartbreak. Confrontation. Failed relationships.

Our own failures. Humiliation. That's the death.

That's the cross. That's suffering. Until you come to a place where you've been through so much together, it doesn't matter when you're called to combat how you look and appear one before the other.

You've been through so much. You can engage in a wrestling to the finish. We would much rather turn up the amplifiers because that makes no requirement upon us as coming into church that can wrestle.

Got the idea? So pull out the plug. A. Christ and the Powers. Hendrik Burkhoff.

B-E-R-K-H-O-F. And so what is the response of powers to believers who have now become formidable and threatening because of their awareness that there's a war on and can engage in it? Now the powers have you as marked and you are an object of their relentless opposition, even their persecution. But even that serves the purposes of God.

For the persecuted church comes forth yet more triumphantly by virtue of what opposes it. And they're defeated all the more. They seek to banish the memory of Christ and the signs of his lordship from men's

awareness in order to renew their own unchallenged dominion.

So if they can get you to act independently without seeking the Lord, they will have won a victory and will have lessened the whole credibility of the church of which you are part. And so I say to the church, did God tell you to go to college? And to make business administration your subject? Or to marry this one or that? Did you consult him? Did you submit the question or the issue before him? Or did you act independently under the assumption, well you have to make a living, surely God will approve the course that I have selected and come behind and ratify it. That is neglecting his lordship.

That is giving the powers of the air opportunity. And they will encourage every such act of independence and self-will. They want to banish from the memory of Christ and the signs of his lordship, from the awareness of the church and become themselves the unchallenged dominion.

They want to relativize what is absolute and make absolute what God calls relative. We have to contend for the faith and the absolute things of God and not allow their success. All resistance and every attack against the gods of this age will be unfruitful unless the church herself is resistance and attack.

Unless she demonstrates in her life and fellowship how men can live freed from the powers. This whole little book is worth that one statement. It's not enough to announce something, it's to demonstrate something.

God has created all things in order that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be demonstrated, not verbalized to the powers of the air. They have got to see the demonstration of another reality, of another value system, of another truth that issues from God as being the foundational reality of the church. And that is what defeats them.

A church whose inner life in itself is itself a proclamation of God's manifold wisdom. Her inner life, what we are through and through is the reality that brings the defeat and is hard and painful to obtain. It's not our exterior, it's not what we verbalize, it's not the turning up of the amplifiers, it is what is the truth of our inner life together.

And that kind of truth takes sacrifice, devotion, time together, the community of God's people. The same provision that will receive Jews in flight, a community of God's people, is the same provision that defeats the powers. The same church that is aware of Israel in the last days and will be to it what it must is the same church that recognizes and defeats the powers.

For the church's willingness to identify with the Jew at a time when they are world hated and pursued and take the risk of that identification is demonstrating another wisdom. It's demonstrating that its own life, its own safety, and its own security is not the first purpose of its being, but that which pertains to God's glory whatever the cost. So I want to pray for such a church in Australia.

So Lord, precious God on high, you've given us a cosmic overview of the faith and now the cosmic task of the faith. That you did not think too extravagant and for which you have created all things. That this be performed and it will end the age.

It will release and bring you and your kingdom and your glory. It will bring the incisive and final defeat. And those who have defeated these powers have by that same maturity and authentic spirituality the right to rule and reign with Christ from the heavenly places.

They will replace the defeated and dispossessed false rulers of this age. And they will rule not in opposition to God, but for God and in keeping with him and the Israel that is now redeemed in the earth. And the whole of the earth will receive the benefit and the blessing.

So we thank you, my God, that you are the victor. That you came to destroy the works of the devil. That you gave birth to a church that will complete what you have begun.

And I bless that church, Lord. This is going to require sacrifice. This is going to require re-examination of all the kinds of things that we have tolerated or acknowledged or even applauded that are devious, that come from below rather than above, whose values stink and are corrupt and have defiled our own children and has come into the church itself and its music and its loudspeakers and its hype and its manipulations.

So, my God, have a church that will bring the final defeat to these powers and release mankind for your gospel and for your so great salvation. Factor this into our understanding. Bring us to the maturity, my God, that is called for.

And we thank you for the privilege of our call and the great enablement of your life and to gird our loins with truth and take upon ourselves the shield of salvation, the helmet of salvation, and to bear the sword of the Lord, which is the word of God, that we might, with spiritual weapons, bring down, my God, what has compromised, seduced, and ruined whole generations of men and even our own. Give us to see through their devices. Give us to see that our culture is not some innocent thing, but shot through with devious and devilish wiles of subtlety to seduce and to corrupt entire generations.

May we protest. May we stand opposed against it. Blow the whistle.

Declare it as false. Show it for what it is and be an alternative of light and salvation for those who can find it in us and be saved out from the world. And its deception and death is our prayer, in Jesus' name.

God's people said, Amen.

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