

Dvd 13 - the Final Challenge to the Church

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the church's vital role in supporting Israel and the importance of deep devotion to God as a means of deliverance and redemption.

Duration: 53:58

Scripture: Psalm 107:6

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "End Time Prophecy"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life of integrity and character for the kingdom of God, focusing on the end-time role of God's people in proclaiming His salvation. It delves into the significance of Psalms 107, highlighting the need for daily devotion and seeking God's counsel. The sermon discusses the issue of Israel's deliverance and restoration, emphasizing the power of prayer and fasting in spiritual warfare. It calls for a deep communion with God and a willingness to surrender to His will, even in the face of challenges and opposition.

Transcript

Jesus. And we see the beauty of their lives and their character and their integrity. And our hearts come at them for the kingdom of God, that they might be an end-time people of God, proclaiming His salvation throughout the earth.

The issue of history, which is the issue of the nations throughout the church. I think my text this morning is Psalm 107. Why that psalm, Art? Because Psalm 107 is my psalm today.

Don't you read a psalm every day? Don't you have a devotional time in the morning before the day begins? If you don't, my people are damned and without hope. As you'll hear from one of the tapes of the messages given just in this past week. The issue of Israel's deliverance, restoration, out from the fire, from being thrown into the fire, into the water, foaming at the mouth.

By the powers of darkness, who since the inception of the people, are out not just to harass but to destroy, will be saved. By those, that Jesus people who have the authority to command that demonic entity to no longer harass and come out of them and not again enter in. And the disciples could not perform that with this symbolic young boy who had been harassed since inception.

And they said, why could we not cast him out, cast them out? Because this kind, this ultimate kind, will not come out except through fasting and prayer. And then I go on to explain what kind of prayer. Not the prayer of petition, which is only preliminary.

We stop at the very point in which we should commence. It's the prayer of communion. It's the prayer of devotion.

Because something is given in the successive giving of ourselves before the Lord, before the commencement of the day, even when we don't feel a thing. We're not even conscious of his presence. And everything militates to tell us how foolish we are to be expending valuable time like that on our floor with a cold draft coming up.

When there's a warm bed waiting and we need our sleep for the rigors of the day. That the issue of Israel's deliverance will not be the heroism of the church, as I said this week, but its devotion. So my own practice, the psalm for the day.

Why 107? Because today's the 17th. Tomorrow I'll be reading Psalm 108 on the 18th. That's just the way it falls out on my reading.

You don't play spiritual roulette and open the Bible and go, oh, no. Systematic. Moving through the psalms.

One a day, the chapter of Proverbs for the day. Your Spurgeon for the day, morning and evening. Your Oswald Chambers, my utmost for his highest for the day.

And some other, whatever supplementary devotional reading. And of course prayer. And of course I end my devotional time with communion.

I take the bread and the wine. I need him daily. I need to be fed and renewed in the spirit and power of that life.

Sorry about that. I just can't eat and drink emblems. Those abstract titles don't do a thing for me.

But to believe and have by faith imparted to the bread and the wine, both the substance and the spirit of the life of the resurrected and ascended son of God, enables me to stand before you and go on tomorrow to Australia. And after 10 or 12, 14 days there, go on to four countries in Africa. Seven countries in seven weeks and 17 flights for a man who's going to be 77.

You can't act like that. And that every speaking is an event except in the power of that life. Refreshed and renewed by each eating and drinking.

Got the picture? Okay. So, let me get my water. That doesn't mean that I'm under obligation to speak from the psalm of the day.

But often it is that the Lord will quicken that very devotional reading and make it the substance of what is to be shared. Not always, sometimes. And this morning, in the absence of any other leading, I am by faith going to examine that psalm with you.

Because it offers us an opportunity to consider God in his cosmic proportions. Maybe that's not the best word, but it'll do for now. Because if we don't renew and deepen the sense of God as God, he will be

invariably trivialized, even while we continue to use the language of the faith and his name.

We have to contend for the faith once and for all given the saints as being more than the sum of its doctrines. The faith is the Lord. It's the knowledge of God as God and not as we think him to be.

So often the scriptures and the psalms, I don't know any single book that sets forth God in so an especial way as the book of psalms. I don't know how to explain it. There's something about the psalmist's knowledge of God that is a category all of its own.

It would not be an exaggeration to say the book of psalms may well be God's provision for the saints of the last days. Isn't that remarkable? So we need to immerse ourselves and swim in the knowledge and sense that the psalmist has of God. And though David is the principal psalmist, there are others, sons of Korah, Moses in one case, a few others.

And yet the remarkable thing is if the italics didn't tell us who the author is, they all seem to be written by David. They're all Davidic. Do you like that word? Are you Davidic saints or New Zealand saints? There's a difference.

One is conditioned by locale and culture, and the other is transcendent, universal, timeless, and eternal. I hope you're moving from the one to the other. As fond as I am of New Zealand, I wouldn't want you to be stuck there, especially when the environment is so inviting.

So give thanks to the Lord. It begins with O. How about your edition? Does your edition begin with O, give thanks to the Lord? Don't miss the O. That's not a little piece of punctuation. That's an exclamation.

It's like a guy getting hit in the solar plexus. The air goes out from him. That O speaks volumes.

And you know what? There are people in this room this morning who have never once uttered O. You've never once gasped. Pity. You need to frequently.

So you see how we need to dote on every word, every syllable? That O is significant. It bespeaks something of a depth in the cry of the psalmist that somehow he has seen something, intuited something that compels an ejaculation of that kind. That O is too deep for words.

It speaks volumes by itself. O, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. Do you know that? I know it better than you.

Because we spoke at the prison last night in the fifth anniversary of its special wing for Christian inmates with a house full of guests. And it was not to be just a little icing on the cake. It had to be a significant statement.

And the Lord gave it. Even after the demand of that five days of school. He's good.

He's good this morning. I hope he'll be good tonight. My last utterance up there where... What's the name of the place? Waikanae.

Where my brother lives in a little chapel. The Lord is so good. Men like myself have more reason to know that than you because we're continually faced with requirement not just to bring nice messages or to see that our reputations are retained or that we would win the affection or esteem of others.

Because we naively believe, you can pray for us, that every utterance is life and death. That every utterance is the issue of eternity. That there are great issues being propounded that we're not privileged to see or to understand but that we would be wise to consider that every speaking of the word of God before his people has got to be momentous, charged with issues that can't be known and yet are there.

And requires grace. Not cleverness. Not past experience.

But the living God to bring forth something that will have consequence not only for those who hear but those who will receive the benefit through the tape. Who knows the breadth of circulation through the word that goes forth? Can you understand why Paul said, who is sufficient for these things? But when have you said that last? Is your Christianity so tame, so predictable? So within your ability to perform that you have never once gasped who is sufficient for these things? Something is amiss. Your Christianity is lacking in apostolic character.

You're not sufficiently being opposed because you're not sufficiently constituting a threat. You're just a nice church on the corner having a kind of culture that the world can tolerate because it doesn't threaten it. And Wellington, I was just reminded as we prayed last night that this is a capital city.

And I had forgotten how ravaged I was. How many years ago, Alistair will remember, that night, my first night in Wellington, the powers of darkness did a number on me that if a hundred massive trucks had rolled over me it would have been less than what I had experienced at their hand. And I had experienced exactly an equal attack in Manila before coming here, also a capital city.

That there's something about capital cities and the issue of government that lends to the principalities and powers of the air an environment of a conducive kind in which they brood and perform their mischief and exert their influence on the city below and the nation through it. You need to know you are in a critical place. And you've not yet stirred those powers to irritation or fright that they continue to say, Jesus we know and Paul we know, but who are you? The Whatchamacallit Baptist Church? You need to start reading my stuff.

You need to start taking the issue of the Jew and Israel seriously, which is your mandate. That will get you in trouble fast enough. Even with them, let alone with the powers.

Hey, I'm still on line one. I'll give thanks to the Lord for his good, for his steadfast love endures forever. What's the Hebrew word for that? Steadfast love.

His chesed. We have a defunct low profile Israeli with us. He's close, if not into the kingdom.

I rejoice for him. The chesed of God, the mercy, the tenderness, the loving kindness of which the psalmist is so familiar and lives by, drinks it. The same kind of psalmist is often crying out for his life.

Lord, they're out to kill me. They're after me. I'm an object of pursuit.

I'm hated. You know why? Because you have this relationship with me, that's why. If you were just a rank and file Baptist, you would not be bothered at all.

But because you're Davidic, because you have this intense love, this affection, because you're jealous for my glory and for my name, because your cry to me is not a cry of distress for alleviation for the suffering that comes through this relationship, but that you would answer because your name is at stake, because

you're suffering reproach, and I cannot bear that the powers should have this kind of ability to denigrate you and that you remain silent and do not attend to your own name and honor. Do you have a heart like that? You can be Gentile and have it by the Holy Spirit, and then you'll learn his mercy. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, those he redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

I spoke at the little retreat we had that some psalms are eschatological. They speak of things that are future, that are pertaining to the end, as if they have already occurred, because the psalmist, like the prophet, sees the thing that is future with such immediacy and such cogency and urgency as if it's now. He's in a timeless place.

And that's written for our advantage, because we're moving to the very conclusion to which these statements refer, a time of trouble, and God will be gathering in, in the time of Jacob's trouble, from the east and from the west, the north and the south, from all the lands in which my Jewish people are yet to be dispersed. Because it says in the prophet Amos, I will sift you through all nations. And your nation is not exempted.

May they find here what God intends for that sifting, and may you be sifted by the sifters. Because God will identify who in fact the real church is, by their response to this people sifted through them in a time of trouble, when they are globally and universally hated everywhere. How will you do, is the issue of where you are in God, and will identify who in fact the true church is.

Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited place. Hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted within them. These are Jews who have lived in condominiums, and comfort and security and prosperity and affluence, finding themselves uprooted, stripped and brought into places that they never would have set foot in a thousand years, and wonder how in fact they got there.

What are they doing in the wilderness? Why is the wilderness necessary, especially being Jews who have not yet come in to the fulfillment of God's calling and destiny as a nation of priests and a light unto the world, and which must be fulfilled. Why? Because if it's not fulfilled, what credibility can we give to the God who made that promise, and gave that call? How is God God, if he is unable to fulfill his calling for Israel, after two millennia of apostasy, and even today, wanting only to succeed in Israel as the Hong Kong of the Middle East. From that people you are going to make a nation of priests and a light unto the world? If I don't, what credibility do I have as God? What value is there in my speaking, my promises or my covenants? The issue of Israel's fulfillment and restoration is the issue of God, for all the world.

You need to be jealous over that, and only by knowing that, will you be able to give yourself in the measure of sacrifice that will be required from you when they pass through. They'll not be on vacation. They'll be in flight from terror that will pursue them in every place.

And if they're not taken in, not offered refuge, they'll perish. But what is the fate of those who'll be caught giving them refuge, and identifying with a loathsome people who'll be accused of wrecking the world's economy, and all of the things to which the charges that come upon Jews historically and in that time, and you're going to identify with them? Just what kind of a Baptist are you? Extraordinary. Because they're your brethren.

Even though they are the least of his brethren, they're equally your brethren. If you'll recognize and have a heart for them in their plundered condition, they will be in waste places, they will be in remote places,

they'll be hungry and thirsty, their soul will faint within them. In order that, they should cry to the Lord in their trouble, which they wouldn't think now in their comfort and condominium existence and high economy and success, ever to cry, ever to speak, even if they're orthodox.

They'll be like Catholics with Latin. They'll utter and go through the appropriate religious thing, they'll talk about God, but there's no real urgency, there's no real cogent connection. They're not really believing.

They're fastidious in the attention to eating kosher and all of the other kinds of things that constitute their orthodoxy, but there's no real sense of God as God. I remember sitting, standing in the midst of a Hasidic congregation, ultra-orthodox, and they were reading from Jeremiah of judgments in which everything is collapsing and horrendous things that are yet future, and they're reading it as if they're reading a Heinz ketchup label. I couldn't stand it.

I turned to the guy close to me and said, I said, do you realize what you're reading? The guy looked at me, what kind of loathsome creep are you? What are you trying to suggest, that I should actually understand the content and take it to heart? Don't you understand this is religion? That's why they have to cry saints, or they'll not be priests and a light to the world, and they'll not cry in their comfort. They'll cry in their distress. They'll cry in their perplexity.

They'll cry when they're stretched to breaking. They'll cry when they'll find themselves in unfamiliar, foreign, and threatening places without hope of finding a way out and despise them. No one is extending to them a hand of kindness or mercy.

They'll cry in their trouble, and when he hears their cry, he delivers them from their distress. Hasn't that always been the case? He led them by a straight way until they reached an inhabited place of refuge. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and the hungry.

He fills with good things. Some sat in darkness and in gloom, prisoners in misery and in irons. This is not just poetry.

This is graphic and literal. I'm predicting that there will be a time, and it's not too distant, that Jews who today are comfortable, even in your city, will find themselves in chains, in manacles, in dungeons, in prisons, not necessarily in Wellington, but in some remote place into which they will be cast from Wellington without any hope whatever of any deliverance from that place that can come to them from man. If God breaks the fetters, if God looses them in his supernatural power, if God sees to their return, you can believe there will be another people, and that's exactly what will happen to those who are in darkness and gloom, prisoners in misery and in irons, for they had rebelled against the words of God.

How instructive this is, that their future misfortune, like their past misfortunes, is not mere historic happenstance. It's an exact proportion to sin, to iniquity, and to transgression. You need to know that, that there's a law of cause and effect, that adversity, crisis, devastation comes in proportion to sin.

God has got to judge it. And what fell upon Jesus was the total weight of the accumulated iniquity of all mankind, past, present, and future, which had to be expressed by a righteous God in wrath and judgment, and fall upon his head and body till he had no form that any should desire him. In measure, my Jewish people are going to experience the consequence of their transgression and of their iniquities.

That's what the last Holocaust was. That's what the future Holocaust will be. How is God God then, brother? Where's his mercy? Where's his kindness? Well, it's not a punitive suffering.

It's a redemptive suffering in order to bring us to an awareness of our condition that we might cry out repentantly and be saved. They had spurned the counsel of the Most High God. Not only spurned it, they hadn't even thought to consider it.

Has Sharon and the present administration in Israel asked God for a way out of their present perplexity and dilemma? Or have they, by their own machination, clever as they are, thought if we will dissolve the Gaza settlements, it will not provoke the Palestinians, we can reduce the military presence, and there will be a step toward peace. Fat chance. What it will mean is that the Palestinians who are firing their rockets from the districts of Gaza will now fire it from the Israeli settlements themselves.

Closer to Tel Aviv. Closer to Jerusalem. There's no human answer to the predicament that Israel is in, and God has seen to it.

Because we're clever, because we always find a way out, because we have a confidence in humanity, because we're ultimate humanists, we've got to be brought to a predicament beyond our ability to solve where only God can save us. That's how I got saved. That's how they'll get saved.

How did you get saved? What did you get saved? Or you just made a decision. They did not only spurn the counsel, they did not even seek it. They had not a faith to believe that it was available, that there's a God who could be consulted, who waits to be asked, because they're secular, because they're atheists.

There's not a God whom they can consider. They're locked in to their own inadequate human resources, and it will cost them. Their hearts will be bowed down with hard labor.

They fell down with no one to help. Then they cry to the Lord in their trouble. See how this is repeated? This is like a piece of music, and I don't have any technical knowledge.

It's like a theme. Da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da. Then it comes again.

Da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da, and right to the end, the crescendo, the repetition, the resonance, the deepening of something of a symphonic kind. This is a symphony in history and in time, and you'll be participants. I hope not just... What's the word? Not observers, but participants in this great and final eschatological and apocalyptic drama by which the age is concluded through Israel's restoration out of trouble through the mercy that comes to it by a church willing for the peril and the sacrifice that the redeemed of the Lord can return to Zion.

They'll be cast out, and they'll return as the redeemed because something happens to them in the course of their trouble and of their distress that compels them to cry, and they find that there's a God who hears and gives answer. What a stunning thing that was for me 41 years ago. Patent atheist.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, dire trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and gloom and broke their bonds asunder. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to mankind.

For he shatters the doors of bronze. He cuts in two the bars of iron. This is going to be Israel's future celebration.

They will be a people of praise. That's what Judah means. The word Jew derives from Judah, which means praise.

But where is the Jew capable of it? Until he has reason, deep reason, that out of distress for the hearing of a cry, God has sawn the iron bars asunder and released the captive. You ready for this? Believe thou this, that the prophet, that the psalmist prophet foresees by the eye of the Spirit a last day's calamity, a national distress, but the end is deliverance, praise. Some were sick, in verse 17, through their sinful ways.

What a wonderful thing for Jews, and you, to come to the acknowledgement of cause and effect, sin and judgment, sickness, rebellion, that these are not arbitrary things because the wind was blowing the wrong way. We need to examine our own sufferings, our own mishap, our own accidents, our own sicknesses, and ask as a first prophetic question, to what degree can this be attributed to some sin on my part, some failing on my part, some failure to be what God is asking, some slackness, this is not some arbitrary mishap. If it is, at least you've begun by asking the right question.

You need to begin always asking, what is the sickness, the thing that I'm suffering, to what degree is the consequence of my own sinful way, and because of my iniquity? They endured affliction, they loathed any kind of food, they drew near to the gates of death, just like the Nazi time, then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them. Just his word heals, his word delivers, he sent out.

The root of the word apostolic is sent, not self-appointed, men who take to themselves titles and fill the air with their nonsense. Something is sent. You know what, dear saints, I think I'm one.

Have you the faith to believe that this is more than happenstance this morning, that because a brother knew that there was a free Sunday morning and he knew of a Baptist church that might open its doors, that that's the outward external, but the truth of the matter is, the guy who's standing before you is sent, not from Brooklyn, New York, from the throne of heaven. And the word that you're receiving is a sent word. And when it's a sent word, it performs a work in them that believe.

When it's a sent word, it delivers. When it's a sent word, it heals. When it's a sent word, it challenges.

When it's a sent word, it requires. He'll send his word and heal them and deliver them from destruction. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to mankind.

Let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices and tell of his deeds with songs of joy. Because song is the final and ultimate expression of that thing which distinguishes us from all the rest of creation, the capacity for speech, the capacity for words. But when we can sing words in praise, this is the ultimate expression of our humanity.

Humanity that has been transformed or humanity that has come into the fullness of God's intention. I'm not saying singing from the overhead projector. I'm saying singing from the involuntary press of joy and gratitude and acknowledgement of God as God.

Even if it's just a little humming, if it's a little thing that you've just made up or even as I do because I like Gershwin and other of the composers, I take their music and I give it my own lyric. The man I love is not some Clark Gable. The man I love is the man that I love and I sing to him in Gershwin.

Singing is an ultimate expression of devotion and this people will have every reason to sing. You have every reason not to wait for the projector but continually to be making melody in your heart. To tell of his deeds with songs of joy.

Some went down to the sea in ships doing business on the mighty waters. They saw the deeds of the Lord, his wonderful works in the deep. He commanded and raised the stormy wind and lifted up the waves of the sea.

They mounted up to heaven. Boy, what a boisterous storm that was and went down to the depths. You ever been like that? I was a high school dropout at the age of 16 and a merchant seaman, 1945.

Some of you were not born yet. There were still mines in the water from World War II. There were ships sunk in the harbors and on the high seas in a liberty ship made by women who had been taught to rivet and many of them just came apart in storms and sank like lead.

I'm on the bow looking for mines and here's a Jewish kid from Brooklyn, romantic idealist, dreamy-eyed poet with a bunch of tough louts and a Swedish alcoholic bosun's mate who would just as soon see me overboard as anything. What an induction into reality from the idyllic Wellington that was my origin. And just to be on those ships to go down and the waves so high and the ship so listing, the water was coming into the smokestack and the bosun's mate, a tackle had broken loose, two-ton tackle and he sent me up with a rope to tie it together and all I knew how to tie was my shoelace.

You know when you're out on sea like that, no side of land in sea as rough as that, it has a remarkable ability to affect your view of reality and your priorities and what in fact is real and what in fact is of ultimate value. If ever you have felt like a peanut, like a cork, like a straw, like a nothing, you'll feel it then. You need it, lest you have an exaggerated view of yourself and a decreased view of him who makes the seas to rise and to sink.

Got the idea? So whether it's in some wilderness place or on the seas, they'll reel and stagger like drunkards, they'll be at their wits end, praise God. When you bring a Jew to his wits end, God begins. But what does it take to bring them? That's where I was with that New Testament aboard the deck of that ship.

Jesus said he came to fulfill the law. They catch the woman in the act of adultery. They bring her to him and they said, OK, wise guy, you said you've come to fulfill the law.

Here's a woman caught dead in the act. The judgment requires stoning. What do you say? Mamma mia, am I going to lose a new Jewish hero? The way I lost Marx and Freud and other of my Jewish heroes.

How could he answer this question? And the sweat was oozing from the palm of my hand. My heart was beating. You know why? I was an adulterer.

And I didn't know it until then. Because my adultery was love. That romantic moment that must not escape.

Now I was caught in the act, in my identification with that woman. And I deserved what she deserved. And what can my new hero say? He said he came to fulfill the law.

I put my finger in the book. I said, I'll think of an answer for him. You're clever, Katz.

You're so clever that when they posted your grades at the university, they put your grades and then the rest of the class on the bell curve. So I'm going to find an answer for him. And I thought and I racked my brain.

And I finally, after much exercise, came to this conclusion. There's no human answer for the predicament that Jesus is in. I wanted desperately for there to be one because my own soul was at stake.

And so with trembling hands, I opened up the New Testament. How many of you have ever read it like that? How many of you have read it on a deck, as a deck passenger, the cheapest way to go? And you're reading out of the light that comes out of the windows where inside the well-paying passengers are having a ball. I tell you that you need to read it with the right heart, right attitude, right setting.

It's another book. It's not a Bible study. And so I'm reading, Jesus bent over the ground, poking through the dirt.

I thought he's stalling for time. And then he looks up and he says, let him who is without sin cast the first stone. I knew this.

That is beyond any human wisdom. That is beyond any human ability. And we will come to hear God and see him and appreciate him when we come to the end of what is human, when we come to wit's end.

But how many of you, because of this morning, would make yourself candidates for that and say, Lord, whatever it takes, I want to be stretched and brought to an end of myself, my categories, my human understanding, the way in which I have made my religion as something comfortable and secure, I'm willing to be brought to an end of those categories that there might be a beginning beyond what is human, that you give, that's radical, and that will affect my whole eternity in another way. God waits for volunteers. He'll not compel you.

So they came to wit's end. They reeled and staggered like drunkards were at wit's end. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble and he brought them out from their distress.

He made the storm still. The waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad because they had quiet and he brought them to their desired haven.

I think the days to which I've just passed is exactly that. We passed through dangerous shoals in Singapore where my trip began. When I came to the pulpit for that first night before 700 Chinese believers who fancy me.

Fancy that. I've been there before. They transcribed my every message.

In fact, they fight for the privilege of transcribing my messages. And now I'm called there again for a last time. What do I say? How do I begin? I remember coming to the pulpit with dread.

How to make a beginning for these days? I have no program, no stratagem. And the Lord gave it. Choked, spluttering step by step.

And then the next night and the next. And I realized we were being moved through shoals where one misstep, one wrong thing, one failure to sense and be caught up in the purpose of God were to substitute my own and the whole would be smashed on those rocks and the whole thing will sink. It must reach its haven.

And the Lord's hands were on the helm. Steering and bringing us through treacherous waters just like this. How would you like to live like that? Ought we not to live like that? Ought that not to be the description of true Christian living? We're embarked on a perilous voyage.

We've got to reach the port. Zion. The treacherous things that await us and seductions and falls and the whole endeavor can collapse.

It's more than what we ourselves can engineer. We need his direction, his hand on that helm. By faith and trust, step by step, painful, trembling, 41 years in the faith, no novice and yet every new occasion is as if there was never a past.

Your past experience does not fulfill you, prepare you for this. It's altogether new, altogether strange, altogether an issue of trust. They just shall live by their faith.

There's a trembling, a dependency, a trust and then we'll thank the Lord for his steadfast love. He'll turn the rivers into a desert, springs of waters to thirsty ground, fruitful land into salty waste because of the wickedness of its inhabitants. Drought, economic failure, crop failure, locust, bugs, blight, judgment, not accident, not geophysical.

Tsunamis, not accident. The shifting of tectonic plates, God, the earth is the Lord's. He set that up for just the expression when he sees the wickedness of its inhabitants.

Likewise, he can turn the desert into pools of water and parched land into springs. Then he lets the hungry live, they establish a place to dwell, they sow fields, they plant vineyards, they get a fruitful yield. By his blessing they multiply greatly.

Amos 9 says that the sower of seed is treading on the heels of the harvester. Millennial blessing has come to Israel just overflowing for Israel shall fill the earth with its fruit after this. When they're diminished and brought low through oppression, trouble and sorrow, he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes.

He raises up the needy out of distress. He makes their families like flocks, the upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness stops its mouth. He shuts the mouth of the adversary.

By his benevolence toward Israel, though it is totally undeserved, the whole earth shall see the glory of God. All flesh shall see both his judgment and his mercy as it is expressed to his people as he shifts them through the last days on land and on sea. That they might be fruitful and fill the earth, not just with their jaffa oranges, but with their priestly benediction of the kind that you're getting today from a Jew.

A peace, a foretaste of what the earth will receive when this entire nation is brought back to Zion through your mercy. New Zealand is beneath the glory of God. All the nations are languishing.

Corruption is spiraling. We're going downward toward Sodom and Gomorrah because there is not a priestly people in our midst to teach us the difference between the profane and the sacred. Only one people are elected for that function.

It's Israel. And they themselves are profane. What shall we do until they're restored? The issue of Israel's restoration is the issue of nations worth every sacrifice to obtain.

All wickedness will stop its mouth. The Lord has triumphed, not through the strongest and the mightiest and the most impressive and the most credentialed, but the weakest. The aged, the infirm, the art-cats, the shabby guys with no credentials that anyone is impressed to consider with the church, the motley collection of the saints.

When I came to this retreat and I saw what God had assembled, I despaired. I said, Lord, what did you do? Scrape the bottom of the bowel? How are these people going to understand me? I speak English. I was hoping for an erudite audience that I could really become expansive.

But look what you've given. These little old ladies and pot-bellied and weak men. It's amazing how they got transformed session by session in my sight.

They were not the weakest. They were the best. They were the choicest in their weakness.

There's a contest of wisdoms, don't you know, that God has created all things that in order through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might be demonstrated to the principalities and powers of the air that through sucklings and babes, his wisdom is perfected to stop the mouth of the adversary who says you have to have credential, you have to have wealth, you have to have academic background, you have to have power, you have to have influence. God says, no. I'll use the weakest, the shabbiest, the most ordinary, without any outward credential.

And through them I will triumph in the glory of my eschatological design for Israel's restoration through a Gentile church who has no reason, naturally speaking, even to be disposed to Jews, let alone to be sacrificial in their behalf when they will not be receiving their gratitude but their insult. That will be the evidence of my glory when they express not what is expected of Gentile dum-dums but a transcendent people who exhibit my nature not because they suck air but because they can't help themselves. They're righteous.

They're filled with the knowledge of me. They cannot do otherwise than to help the least of these, the brethren that are naked and thirsty. Their righteousness compels them.

Love compels them. They're full of mercy. And they've already been tested in the church, in the demands of the church with the saints before the Jews come or else they'll not be prepared at all.

So if they're just a bunch of passive religionists looking at the back of each other's head Sunday after Sunday and are not in actual interaction, in dialectical interaction, in existential confrontation, speaking the truth of love and the issues that come up in the intensity of church with its community, how shall they be prepared for the Jews? You want the Jews to find you out and reveal how shabby and fraudulent your Christianity is? Better we find it out now with each other and attend to it so that when they come the real thing is there and can be tested. So let those who are wise give heed to these things and consider the steadfast love of the Lord which you have reserved by the word that was sent this morning. Got the picture? Shall we pray? What do we do with a word like this? Just nod? Interesting diversion? Then we'll go back to normal next Sunday? Or do we say, look, you appointed this? This man sent, this word was from you and it was a word that you knew and in fact it was a work to walk in that was established before the foundations of the earth were laid.

You foresaw this occasion this Sunday morning in Wellington that you're addressing the nation through this immediate congregation in an environment that is contrary to apostolic reality and suffering and the

cross that they have to fight to see through this benign and seductive environment to catch the essence and reality that the psalmist knew that they'll live by the book and will put their eyeballs in the book and draw their reality from the book more than they will from the overt environment that wants to seduce them. That's a decision that you have to make. And if you make it, you know what it'll do for you? It'll make you strange, like me.

You'll be strange and a Sojourner and a pilgrim in the world. You won't be Mr. and Mrs. Nice Guy who's a Christian but also one of the boys and fun. You'll be solemn.

You'll be sad. You'll know tragedy, grief. Your identifications and priorities will be altered.

You'll be other than what you are and you'll be eternally grateful for that. That you have not lived a Christian life beneath the glory of God. That you called for the conservation of the ages, the last days and you didn't even know they were the last days because you were not preoccupied with that people who are its index, the Jew.

Let me pray for you and you pray with me, okay? Make a decision. Choose heroic gospel reality, apostolic reality, church as community and not a comfortable Sunday environment. Lord, we bless you.

What love that will not let us go. What a paradox that you've created this environment in which everything in us that's natural just wants to languish in it. I just want to roll in the grass like a puppy.

I just want to enjoy. I don't want to be bothered with exacerbating issues of crisis and challenge in the cross but I'm fighting, my God, for reality. I want to see through the things that are beguiling to the things that are eternally true.

I want to see as you see and you see it altogether differently. This is not yet our paradise. God forbid we should make it that.

So Lord, bless these children. Bless this church. Let them receive a word.

Let them understand what it is that you're saying in all this. It's a call. And may you receive a yes, Lord, whatever the cost, whatever the consequence.

Yes, I know we will be troubled. We will be stretched. We will be extended.

But God forbid that I should dismiss this as a Sunday novelty and even cravenly yearn to go back to things as usual. Bless this people, Lord. You've established New Zealand.

You have a special purpose for it in your last day's will. God forbid that any of your intention fall to the ground. Remind your people why they're here and for what reason.

Let New Zealand itself be a wilderness of the nations through which lost sheep of the house of Israel shall pass and find you in the reception that they will receive here that is not dutiful, obligatory, and religious, but free-willed and happy and joyous even though it is sacrificial and threatening. Bless this people. Let them not miss the day of their visitation and their call.

Thank you and give you praise for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And God's people said, Amen. Amen.

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