

# Nor-01 a True Apostle

by Art Katz

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*Art Katz emphasizes the significance of apostleship and the power of words in building a strong foundation for the church.*

**Duration:** 44:08

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:2, John 1:1, Ephesians 2:19-20, 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, Hebrews 3:1

**Topics:** "Apostle"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of relationships and how God brings people together at the right time. He mentions how everyone in the room has been prepared by the Lord in different places. The speaker then encourages the audience to go back to their own people and share the gospel with power and conviction. He highlights that being Gentiles should not be a threat to the Jewish people, as they are part of a heavenly kingdom. The speaker also mentions that God chose the Jewish people not because they were the greatest, but because they were the least, and he emphasizes the power of the gospel message despite its foolishness to the natural mind.

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## Transcript

That's where I find myself. That's not an egotistical statement. I'm not celebrating myself.

I just know that God does not waste me. I'm not an entertainer or a performer. I'm earnest in the purposes of God.

And therefore he brings me where his earnest purposes are. I was told this morning I should not be offended if the group is small. I said, my dear brother, that's what I prefer most.

I get uncomfortable when it becomes large. The truest things of God seem to be where the smallest things are. That's why he chose the Jewish people to begin with.

Not because they were the greatest, but because they were the least. They were people without a reputation. Former slaves in Egypt.

And he chose them to be his people. That they should make him known. That the whole nation should be a nation of priests and a light to the world.

And when the Messiah came, where did he come? To that nothing nation. In the city of Nazareth, without a reputation. That even the disciples had to ask, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? And born out of a foolish virgin.

A young woman without any distinction. Not the daughter of a priest or a royalty. This is the way of God always.

And that's why people miss it. Because God's way is not man's way. He chooses the foolish thing.

Rather than the thing which is mighty and wise according to the law. That's why he chose me. I'm a foolish thing.

And almost always weak. Always tired. No strength in my body.

And that's when we see the greatest glory. That no man should boast in himself. That God might be all in all.

So there are many paradoxes in the faith. You understand that word, a paradox? Things that seem to be in contradiction. We're told to be strong in the Lord.

But yet it's not our strength. Paul celebrated his weaknesses and his infirmities. That he might show forth the glory that was in his earthen vessel.

That which was from God and the strength from God in him. And I want to speak to you this morning about Paul. Because he's such a picture to us of what God is wanting in the church itself.

He's such a superb model. That's what an apostle is. God says the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

Still, always, the church will never have any other foundation. And you know a building is no better than its foundation. Even though it's the part that is not seen.

It's invisible. It's concealed. Yet it's the most important part.

Everything rests upon it. I want to talk to you this morning about that foundation. It's the foundation of the church.

But it's also your foundation personally. For you yourself are the church. God says built up of living stones.

A house for God. In which his spirit will dwell. Because he's comfortable there.

It's a house that is like him. It has the same character as he. Built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Because Jesus himself was also an apostle and a prophet. And you know that? Prophet, priest and king.

Then in the book of Hebrews you read, The apostle and the high priest of our confession. So these are very great words. With very great meanings.

So that we might be a great church. To the glory of God. Apostolic and prophetic.

And God wants you to begin to enjoy words. This is our special privilege being made in his image. In the beginning was the word.

That's how the gospel of John begins. The word was with God and the word is God. How does the Genesis begin, the first book of the Old Testament? The spirit of God brooded over the chaos.

And God said, let there be light. Right from the beginning. The spirit and the word.

The heart and the mystery of the faith. That's what an apostle himself is. A prophet also.

Men of spirit and word. So we know how cheaply the world has used words. And the world's language is vile.

And so also is the world. As it's speaking, so also is it. It's true for us too.

As we speak, so are we. So there's so many things I would love to share with you. And I've already been sharing with you.

To come to an appreciation of words. And to probe their meaning. A dictionary is a very great tool.

And I encourage you to use it. But the greatest words we will not find in the dictionary. These are words that need to find us.

That apprehend us. Take us in. And change us.

And there's one word I want to set before you this morning. I've already mentioned it. An apostle.

It's an ultimate word. It's an ultimate word. With an ultimate meaning.

We need to be so jealous for this word. And be careful because there's going to be false apostles at the end of the age. And we know that when the enemy tries to bring us a false substitute.

That there's something very important that God wants to put before us. Because if we become deceived and come under the influence of false apostles. And they become the foundation of our church.

What then shall the church itself become but false? So we need to begin to appreciate the meaning of this word. What is an apostle? What is an apostolic word? What is an apostolic foundation? Why has God made them the foundation of the church? Not just what they say and what they teach. But what they are in themselves.

And what I said last night, I said the apostle is the thing in himself. He is a completely God-formed person. Who no longer lives his own life.

He is bound by the spirit, the holy spirit. And Paul said, I go to Jerusalem. And that doesn't just mean the physical city, Jerusalem.

But single-mindedly, always moving in the fulfillment of the purpose of God. We need to study such men. Because it's the picture of what God wants for us all.

And God gives us information about them. From their own writings. Letters that such men wrote to the young church.

Young in the faith as you are. Newly saved. Usually by the apostles' work himself.

And Paul brooded over these young converts to the faith. And wanted to be with them. But wasn't always able to.

So he would write back to them a letter. To encourage them in the new faith. To remind them of the truth to which they had been brought.

And give them counsel and advice that they could grow in the faith. They were very practical letters. Written probably as he was traveling and in motion.

But they were so full of the spirit. So much inspired by God himself through the apostles. That it has come into the scriptures itself.

As much as any book in the Old Testament. What a statement that is in itself. Of how much God celebrates the character and the life and the writing of these men.

So it's in my heart this morning just to share with you from one of Paul's letters. It's a letter to the New Believers in Thessalonica in Greece. Let's put this in the middle so you can have it.

Maybe you can just read that first chapter. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Amen. Amen.

Amen. So Paul begins with a greeting to the church that has newly been formed in Thessalonica. And he doesn't just say from Paul.

It's Paul and. Silvanus and Timotheus. Paul always moved in a team.

He was never a single or solitary figure. He always expressed the genius of the church itself. In its corporateness.

In its interdependence. In the need for others. Need for relationship.

Men and women who would be moving together in the purposes of God. So even this greeting is full of instruction. Paul and.

I'm traveling with a brother also. It may be that you'll not hear from him today. But it's Art and Dick.

And what shall we say of those who sent us from America? With whom we are vitally related and connected. And with whom we have been growing up in God. And whose prayers are with us even this morning.

We need to really have the sense of the glory of the church. We're not talking about an organization. We're talking about an organism.

A vital living thing that is worldwide. Look how remarkable our relationships here in this room are. A man that we met maybe almost 20 years ago.

15 and 10 years ago. But in a moment of time, when it was ready, the Lord brings us together again. And we have all been prepared by the Lord in other places.

But we come together in a moment of time and we're flowing together. Hallelujah! Amen. And Paul says, Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

That sounds like a little easy greeting. But don't miss this. When Paul says to you, Grace be unto you.

And peace be unto you. You have both grace and peace. Because when Paul speaks it, it becomes a fact.

The word of God in his mouth is not a cliché. It's not a little cheap superfluous greeting. His word becomes a fact.

And Paul says, I bless you in the name of the Lord. You are blessed. And do you know what? When you say, Be blessed in the Lord.

That one is also blessed. You have a new power. A new authority.

Yours is no longer an idle word. It's a word of spirit and life. That's creative.

And performs something. We need to be conscious of that. And stand God over our mouths.

Of what we speak, what we say. Knowing that we have the power to bless. Or equally to do injury.

If we speak unadvisedly with our mouths. So these are the new privileges that come to us in the faith. And we need more frequently to bless each other.

I prayed this morning in the Myron family house. We leave our peace behind in your house. That was not a cheap word.

That was a word of blessing. Which God has given us the authority to confer. That house is going to be more blessed.

Because that word was spoken. What new kinds of questions does that raise? About the function of the church in the world and in the nations. If we can speak such words.

Be blessed. Grace be unto you. Peace of God be to you.

This is an apostolic perception. This is an apostolic way of perceiving the value and meaning of words. Which has been lost to the church until now.

So that when the church has said. Blessing be unto you. It has been a cliché.

Ceremonial talk. Religious talk. But God is wanting to bring us back to the apostolic mentality.

Which understands the value of our words and our speaking. So that it will again have that value. That we can go on from grace to grace and blessing to blessing.

Even as we bless one another with our words. Because our words become an event. That's what I'm believing for this morning.

When we prayed before we came this morning. I did not just pray. Lord use me to instruct these young believers.

No, I was more ambitious than that. I said Lord let my word be an event for them. That it will actually create something in them.

And even come right into the foundation of this work. That's the way Paul thought. And that's the way God would have us to think.

Can you see that the whole of our spiritual life is heightened? Heightened, extended, deepened. Can you say the whole meaning one more time? Can you see that the whole of our spiritual life is heightened or deepened? Church is more than the succession of services. My God, this is exciting.

This is enormously significant. This is full of potential and consequence. Not only for ourselves.

For the earth. Exactly. And what has the devil been doing until now? Minimizing the importance of the church.

Making it only an institution. A kind of religious function. A minimal thing.

You know what the tragedy is? Not only has the world believed that. The church itself also. We need to see the glory of the church as God intended it.

In a word, we need to see apostolically. And that's why God has given us these letters. So he says to them in verse 3. Remembering your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope.

And then he talks about it in verse 5. That our gospel came to you, not in word only, but also in power. And in the Holy Ghost. And in full conviction.

That's when it comes to you apostolically. And not mechanically. There's a difference.

Paul speaks in other places about my gospel. It doesn't sound like a man talking about some formula for salvation. It sounds more like a love affair.

My gospel. How he loves it. It's so powerful.

It brings people from death to life. It's the power of God unto salvation. To the Jew first.

And also to the Greek. He's not ashamed of it. No, he acknowledges that it's foolishness to men.

God has chosen the foolish things. It's not impressive intellectually. It's got to do with death and blood and suffering.

Resurrection out of death. Blood that removes the power of sin. Creates new life.

It's foolishness to the natural mind. But in itself is power. It's not a formula.

With step one, step two, step three. The very word of it is a power. And he said, that's the way it came to you.

You former pagans. You didn't know which end was up. You were completely out of it.

What did you know about the commonwealth of Israel? The holy things of God. The eternal purposes of God. You were pagans.

You were drinking your beer out of sin. And you drank your beer from human skulls. You were fornicating yourself into doom.

But God sent me. That's what an apostle is. One who is sent of God.

That's the actual translation of the Greek word apostille. One who is sent. Not by men.

But by God. Through men. Sent with the laying on of hands.

And he whom God sends brings the word of God. Not the word about God. The word of God.

Which itself is a sent word. A living word. That's why he says, it came to you in power.

And in full conviction. Because to him whom God gives his words. He gives also the spirit without measure.

How would you like to be once sent? That's why you are here. To be prepared for ascending. Amen.

He says, so the gospel came to you not in word only. But in power and in the holy ghost. And in full assurance.

As you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. In the very same statement. Where he speaks about the power of the word.

He speaks also about the character of his life. In the very same verse. Power and character are linked together.

And something is eternally established in the wisdom of God. And always will be. In that which is apostolic.

That's why God can send such men. And trust them with his word. They are not going to use the gospel to line their pockets.

How much is this going to get me? How am I going to be honored by men? Or be promoted in the religious organization? He said, you yourself know. What manner of men we were. Among you.

For your sake. Not for my sake. Not for our sake.

Not for our reputation. For your sake. Paul had only two motivations.

God's sake. And your sake. Never his sake.

That is apostolic motivation. There is no other. You yourself know.

What manner of men we were among you. From the very beginning. For your sake.

You know it. And so does God. You think that that's an accidental statement? Maybe Paul wrote this under great pressure and hurriedly.

But the spirit of God was in that statement. To give us eternal instruction. Of a principle which is dear to God.

And has been lost to the modern church. The conjunction of character and power. Don't you neglect either one.

Grow up together in both. And you became followers of us and of the Lord. And it says here in verse six.

What kind of an egotist is Paul? You became followers of us and the Lord. What is he saying? Is he equating himself with God? That to follow him is also to follow the Lord? That it's one and the same thing? Yes! What audacity! What arrogance! Except that it's true. That to follow Paul is to follow the Lord.

That's why he could say, be imitators of me as I am an imitator of Christ. That's what an apostle is. And that's what an apostolic church is.

So one with God. Follow me and the Lord. One and the same thing.

Without any egotism. Without any self-consciousness. The most natural kind of statement.

Which he wrote hurriedly. But what a picture it is. Of what an apostolic man is.

A jewel. And indeed in the book of Revelation. It says that in the New Jerusalem that comes down from above.

That it has twelve walls. Each with the names of the twelve apostles. These jewels are built right into the foundation of the eternal city.

So much are they the statement of God himself. Jesus was crucified, buried and rose again. And ascended to the Father.

But his ministry continued perfectly. Through apostolic and prophetic men. This is what you're going to hear as you go on in your ministry.

I like Jesus, but I don't like Paul. Paul spoiled it. He established a church.

He went further than Jesus himself would have gone. He made these statements about women and about this and about that. Such foolishness.

Paul's statements are the statements of Jesus. Because Paul himself was a resurrection man. Because Paul himself was a resurrection man.

He said, I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live. Yet not I. Christ lives in me.

Now let that sink in. Because I'm a Jew also. Like Paul.

But I'm not celebrating Paul because he's Jewish. That's not what makes Paul great. It's not his Jewish training.

It's not his Jewish intellect. He said he counted all those things as dung. That he might win Christ.

We're getting pure Jesus here. Through an apostolic man. Who has no life to live unto himself or for himself.

You know what manner of men we proved to be among you. Think of what that means. This was a Jew coming to Gentile pagans.

They should have been suspicious about him. Because those Israelites had a certain reputation that had come even to the pagan world. They're very proud.

And religious. And they have old traditions. And they think they are the chosen people and superior.

So they should have been very suspicious about this Paul. You know this friction between Gentiles and Jews. It never existed for them.

Paul walked right into their hearts. They accepted him immediately. He said you remember what manner of reception we had among you from the Gentiles.

He said you remember our life among you. Because he did not come to them as a Jew. He did not come to them representing a national culture.

He came to them as a transcendent man. Above nationality, above religion, above culture. He was the man of the kingdom.

That did not threaten Gentiles. Didn't make them feel fearful. And he came to them as a father.

And loved them into the faith. And gave them not only the gospel but his life also. What a picture for us.

Now that we have come to the end of the age. And now it's our turn to go back to his people. And to be to them at the end of the age what they were to us at the beginning.

And you should be sent to Israel to the Jewish people who are in darkness. And you should be sent to the Jewish people who are in darkness. And bring to them the gospel.

With much power. And full conviction in the Holy Spirit. Knowing what manner of men you are.

That they should not be threatened because you are Gentiles. You are something more than that. Something other than that.

Beyond culture, beyond nationality. And apostolic people. Of another kingdom.

Heavenly. Oh glory. Let's take a little break.

Hallelujah. Glory. Thank you Jesus.

A word in their hearts. In their deepest spirit. Into the very foundation of their life and being.

And Lord raise them up with such a foundation. To become in this last generation. Such a people.

As Paul himself was at the first. I bless these children Lord. In the holy name of Jesus.

For that. Amen.

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