

The God Who Devastates

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon challenges believers to confront the necessity of divine devastation for true spiritual awakening and understanding of God.

Duration: 55:30

Scripture: Job 34:32, Psalm 119:71, Isaiah 42:8, Matthew 6:33, Romans 11:11, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Revelation 22:17

Topics: "Devastation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by urging the audience to humble themselves before God and seek His guidance. He mentions that his books, available in the foyer, are more comprehensive and anointed than his spoken words. The main topic of the sermon is the Holocaust and the speaker emphasizes the magnitude of the devastation caused by the systematic genocide of six million Jews. He highlights the shocking aspect that this atrocity did not occur in a primitive or uncivilized area, but in a supposedly civilized society. The speaker calls for a deeper understanding of the gravity of the situation and a realization that we are living beneath the glory of God. He references the story of Moses and how God called him because he turned aside to see, suggesting that we too need to turn aside from our shallow existence and truly see God.

Transcript

I call for a commitment that night that I and a few others there made, and I've always been touched by Art's preaching. Art was a young Jewish man, very much caught up in intellectual and even communistic pursuits. He's one of the Jews that the Holy Spirit, I believe, has picked out and specially saved in the last days to minister to the body of Christ and to prick our consciences about our Jewish brethren and our Jewish brethren-to-be.

Art wrote a book years ago, Ben Israel, which swept through to the then young charismatic church. He was very much in demand and speaking all over the place in Europe, and still is. Then he and Inger, his wife, retreated to Minnesota for a while where they've been.

Now, I believe, in the past five or six years, the Lord's really begun to open doors again in a special way for Art. It's always a pleasure to have him here. I've never heard him speak.

I didn't get something tremendous out of it. I'm sure that the Lord's going to do that tonight. So, Art, why don't you come on up and take your liberty.

I always receive Art as a prophet. I don't know how they receive him other places, but I believe that we get a prophet's reward if we receive him that way. Well, you dear saints, you're going to be sorry that you've ever seen my face, or you'll eternally rejoice.

Nothing in between. I sense that you need something desperately urgent, and I'm fool enough to be an instrument available to God for that kind of surgery. I have a sense of like a veil.

What do they call that fleshly membrane over the congregation that needs incision, a scalpel, a cutting, a laying back, an opening up, a bringing forth. And I really have a peculiar burden tonight. Like, can we afford a throwaway night that doesn't really count, where we can just pull out the stops and go for broke and don't even try and preach a commendable, intelligent message? Something really off the wall, irrational, that if the Spirit of God is not in it, well, I'll take it back, if the Spirit of God is even in it, you'll come away perplexed.

I think we need perplexity. I have the kind of sense that we don't know as we ought to know, and that there's a God whose love is so great, and whose knowledge is so perfect of what is real, that I wouldn't put it past him, really, to do something devastating, to bring us from where we are to where we need to be. And the sense is that nothing less than that which is devastating will succeed in it.

That's why God brings devastations. Because his thoughts are not our thoughts, and his ways are not our ways. As great as is the distance from heaven to earth, so great is the distance between his thoughts and our thoughts, even when our thoughts are correct.

You've got correct thoughts, but you're as removed from God and from heaven as great as is the distance between heaven and earth. And you know what God periodically does in order to shorten the gap and to startle and make us aware of the disparity and the discrepancy between ourselves and him? He brings devastation. What would you say is the greatest historical devastation of modern times? Question and answer time.

What's the single greatest devastation in the 20th century? Of course, there's been a lot of devastation. Maybe it's not a fair question. World War II? Definitely.

The Holocaust is really what I have in mind. Part of it, it has a very special character, certainly a devastation of ultimate proportions for the Jewish people, and one that occupies me sorely, and one that I feel that has not occupied us enough. I just have come from a recent conference on the Holocaust at a university on the West Coast, a scholar's conference.

I joke about how did I get in. In fact, the wonder is how did I remain in once I got in, having been shut up on my third public statement, trying somehow inoffensively to introduce the subject of God, and being told that this was a scholar's conference and not an evangelistic occasion. And hearing those words, I realized why it is that God has to send his fricos into such conferences.

Because the reason that we have holocausts is that we have separated scholarly functions from God, which he never intended. Secular and sacred is only the world's convenience. These are not God's categories.

Everything is sacred. And unless there's a little shockwave and a little untoward activity by God where men don't expect it, we'll shut God out, and the secular will surely become profane. So, you think you can understand me? I'd rather be misunderstood or not understood at all, and take a shot at allowing the Lord

through my mouth to jab you a bit, and to leave you perplexed, then you should go home thinking it was a good message and what a nice speaker.

I'm willing to risk rupturing my relationship with your pastor. So great do I sense that the need is. And not you only.

You're expressive of a greater need, just like it all over Christendom. You know what the remarkable thing is? It's Christendom at its best, and still so wanting in divine reality that you ache. And if I ache, how much does God ache? So, Lord, we give you this night in a kind of a throwaway sense.

Do with it what you will. Continue to let me ramble. Let your buckshot find lodging here and there in certain hearts.

Ruffle a few feathers. Step on a few toes. Knock a few heads.

Challenge us. Raise a standard, a plumb line from heaven. My God, that will shame us.

Make us to understand, Lord, that we're living under a kind of fleshly tissue, a membrane. Everything is transmuted through it. We don't get the full impact of anything.

Joy, reality, truth, God, each other. Everything is blunted, dulled. And we ask, Lord, that you would insert your scalpel and open a hole, make a slit, and let divine reality in of a kind that will make us out of place.

Bring us into collision with things with which we ought to collide and have not. Unfit us for the world, and fit us for yourself as a people really persuaded that these are the last days, that the time is short, that the tasks are urgent, and that we are ill-prepared to serve them. Unless you help us in your great mercy.

So have the whole possession, my God, and just let it rip. Do what you will, say what you will, and at least once a year we ought to have something like this, just for the heck of it. And we give you the praise, and we invite your reckless abandon with us.

Don't spare, and don't be restrained. And give this people hearing ears. Let them hear a spirit word that does not appease and gratify their minds, but mystifies and perplexes it, but lodges something in their spirits that will not let them go.

Let there be a shriek somewhere along the way, here tonight or somewhere in the night hours. Thank you for calling the church to be the ground and the pillar of truth. Give us such a love for that truth that will make us maniacal, put us at odds with those who are satisfied only with the technical data of it, and are not too concerned for the spirit of truth.

Come, Lord, waken us. We thank you and give you the praise. In Jesus' name, God's people said, Amen.

Well, I just happened to have one of my papers on the Holocaust. Don't fear, I'm not going to read it. It would not even be intelligible to you.

The subtitle is, Thinking the Unthinkable. This much you need to know, that the magnitude of the devastation that came with the systematic, genocidal annihilation of six million Jews a half century ago has got to be one of the great, brute, rude events of all times. What makes it particularly probing is that it did not take place in some primitive, uncivilized area of the earth where we would expect some kind of bestial conduct on the part of men.

It was perpetrated in the land of Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Hegel, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Fichte, Schiller. I know you probably don't know one out of those names, but I can extend it so much as to say this. Germany was the epitome of civilization.

It's a conundrum, saints, a hard-to-be-understood paradox in history that something as vile and as devastating as that could be perpetrated by a people of such an eminent kind. And even when I was an atheist, I knew that the key to the meaning of human existence was to be found in the graves of the victims, that somehow we have buried them too quickly. They need to be unearthed.

What's the word? Exhumed. And we need to leap in and wrestle with the bones. There's a mystery there, and it would be tragic if we were content to pass on and let it go.

Don't think that you have any apostolic calling at all until you will back up and examine the devastating things of history and of your own life and probe and ask the why of it and be willing for ruthless things to be exposed that challenges you at every level. That's what Moses experienced on the backside of the desert in the wilderness, tending the sheep for 40 years until everything in him that was Egyptian and brilliant and Jewish and distinguished was extinguished. There was nothing left that could be considered credible.

He was a man shot through with contradiction, with a sense of defeat and failure, having failed to be to his own people what he thought that he ought. All that he could boast of was one dead Egyptian, and God allowed him to stew in that condition. And in that condition on the backside of the wilderness on the Mount of God, tending the flock of God, he passed a phenomenon of a bush burning that was not consumed.

And he stopped and he turned aside to see and to ask why. And when God saw that he turned aside to see, he called his name twice and brought him into his apostolic last day's purposes to send him to the Pharaoh, not some peripheral Egyptian, but smack dab where the action really is. To a man who was tongue tied and stuttering and felt himself completely inept and incapable.

Therefore, he was qualified. And God said, I will be with you because he turned aside to see. I can't help but sense that somehow we're the victims tonight of the failure to turn aside to see.

We're the victims of a kind of shallow and callow day by day existence that gets by. We're satisfied with things that do not satisfy God. And we refuse to blow the whistle so long as we can perform the perfunctory necessities of life and of religion and go home in time for the late news or whatever it is that awaits us after the service.

We are living beneath the glory of God. We're not sufficiently alive to God. And I think a rabbi rightly said that why God called Moses is that when he saw that he turned aside to see.

This is the apostolic distinctive, because once you turn aside, there's no assurance of ever turning back to where you were or what you saw before. You may be permanently dislodged out of your whole sense of things, the rightness of things, your view of things, and brought into another dimension of seeing that threatens, eclipses, and changes everything. God has put before us great events, a great devastation, and we've not turned aside to see because it's a devastation of inexplicable suffering, of men treated bestially, of conditions so horrible they cannot even be civilly re-described.

And even on this trip, when my diesel would not start on a cold upstate New York morning, we had a call at AAA, and the man who came was a Ukrainian refugee or immigrant, and one word led to another, and he recalled for me how when the Nazis had occupied the Ukraine that they took the intelligentsia out of the

locality where he was. I think anyone who wore glasses or had a college background or was a shopkeeper or a professional or gave any suggestion of an intelligence beyond that merely sufficient to feed one's face, they took 18,000 of these people, the same kind I think that were destroyed in Cambodia or Vietnam or wherever it is these devastations take place, and they brought them out of the locality, and they had them to lie prostrate in the road. And they ran over them with tanks, while a bulldozer dug great ditches to heap the bodies into the ditches, whether they or not they were alive or dead.

That's only a little microcosmic detail of a whole decade of unspeakable horror and atrocity. Have you ever asked the question why? And I don't mean why sociologically or politically or even historically. The why that I think we need to ask is where was God? Jewish faith in the God of their tradition has suffered a terrible eclipse since Auschwitz because they cannot reconcile the systematic murder of six million of God's covenant people, a million and a half of whom were children, and they cannot find an answer to the question, where was God? Do you know? You'll never be an ultimate people for God unless you ask ultimate questions.

And guess where God turned me this morning, probably for you. In one book that describes the Holocaust of a single man in such devastation that was totally inexplicable because he himself was undeserving of that kind of calamity. What book would that be? Let's turn toward the end of it, where we come to the last of the explanations for this Holocaust on the part of Job's comforters.

You know, the remarkable thing is you go through 36, 37, 38, that the statements that are made to Job to explain his devastation are not cheapies. They are about the most astute, intelligent, spiritually and biblically sound explanations for suffering of the righteous that can be given anywhere in scripture. And yet, you know what the remarkable thing is? At the end of the book of Job, God says to these men who gave that counsel that he was angry with them because he did not speak of God as Job was to speak.

This raises remarkable questions. How was it that they could be so correct and yet be so wrong? That God would censure them and if Job did not himself pray for them after they had made a sacrifice of seven bullocks. Let's turn to that in 42, chapter 42, verse 8. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams.

What's the significance of seven? Perfect, complete sacrifice. Not a one or a two. It needed to be an ultimate sacrifice for ultimate offense, though correct.

And these men were astute, discerning, understanding. They would eclipse the understanding of any one of us in this room tonight and all of us put together. And yet they required such a sacrifice before God would bless them.

Take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up yourselves, for yourselves, a burnt offering. And my servant Job shall pray for you. For him will I accept, lest I deal with you after your folly, in that you have not spoken of me, the thing which is right, like my servant Job.

That's remarkable. However correct they were, their correct statements were unacceptable to God. And they didn't do Job any good either.

By them he did not come to a place of repentance or an acknowledgment of God or a new perception of the faith. It left him completely cold. It was lifeless, though correct.

And if you read some of it, I mean, it's marvelous. Let me see. Verse 17 of chapter 34.

Shall even he that hateth right govern? And wilt thou condemn him that is most just? Verse 23. For he will not lay upon man more than right, yet that he should enter into judgment with God. Verse 26.

He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others, because they turn back from him and would not consider any of his ways. Verse 29. When he gives quietness, who then can make trouble? And when he hides his face, who then can behold him, whether it be done against a nation or against a man only? Verse 31.

Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement. I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me.

If I have done iniquity, I will do it no more. Not only is this correct, but it's sublime. It's poetic.

It's superbly expressed. And yet the men who expressed this counsel to Job required a sacrifice of an ultimate kind. And the prayer of Job, in order to be released unto God, lest his anger abide upon them.

Because they did not speak as his servant Job spoke. And Job speaking came after God turns to Job and takes a shot at explaining to him something about ultimate reality, that eclipses all of our categories, all of our understanding. Presents a sense of God who does not need to explain anything.

It's a God who is God. And he'll afflict whom he will afflict. Even the righteous.

His ways are not our ways. Although we know that we know that he's just and righteous altogether. But it may not always appear so.

In chapter 38 it begins, then the Lord answered Job, Job out of the whirlwind. And maybe you can tell me later, if you're still talking to me when all this is over, why he addresses Job out of a whirlwind. I'm not sure that I know what a whirlwind is.

But it sounds like something of a stormy kind, whirling, and I don't know what, God in some kind of ultimate condition of the kind by which he spoke to the prophet Elijah in the cave. Maybe it's a God who's distressed or I don't know what. But there's a speaking out of a whirlwind that we probably need ourselves.

And all I'm doing is creating a little breeze, let alone a whirlwind. We need God out of the vortex. We need God devastatingly.

We need a God who shatters our categories, even our correct ones. To communicate something that is more dear and more precious than correct statements about God, but the knowledge of God as he in fact is. Awesome, holy, fearful, to be dread.

I would give almost anything if I could see restored to myself and to the church the fear of God. You know what I suspect would happen if we had it? We would not have begun the service tonight the way we did. Automatically, boom, boom, boom.

Musicians, drums, guitars, and all the other kinds of things that we did and go right into our program. We might even have waited on the Lord. We might even have entered this room with trembling.

We might even have thought that this is more than just a midweek service or a speaker passing through. Why, it might even be divine encounter, visitation, event. Some untoward and unpredictable thing, for God knows we need such.

But we have a blasé, stinking attitude that has no real expectancy in God. We're mechanical and habitual, and this is the thing that we do on Wednesday nights. Would to God he would speak to us out of the whirlwind.

We need it. The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Do we have any of those? Words without knowledge. They're correct, but they're not knowledgeable.

What a paradox. Better to have fewer words that are knowledgeable. Because that's God's first accusation or charge against the man who was described in the beginning of this book as upright.

Have you found such a one as Job who eschews evil and who is upright on the face of the earth? He was an exemplary man. In fact, there's a place where he describes his credentials and what he did for the poor and how people fastened on his words and the kind of respect that he enjoyed in his community. Men stopped speaking when Job opened his mouth.

For every time, wisdom, gracious utterance, ponderable statements, full of charity, justice, righteousness. Can you find such a one upon the face of the earth? God asked Satan. And yet however exemplary his condition was, he had to be devastated by God.

And however eloquent his words were, and however knowledgeable, they were words without knowledge. Just like those that were spoken to him by his, quote, comforters, for whom God required ultimate sacrifice, they were so much out of his pleasure, though they were correct. Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

I love a God like that. You like a God who demands of you? You want to know something, saints? We have not been demanded of enough. If you had been, you wouldn't need a freako like me.

We're getting by with murder. We're getting by with casual airs. We're getting by with cheap amens and hallelujahs and the singing of a few choruses in a buck in the collection plate and looking beatific and religious on Sunday.

Only God knows what is the true condition of this congregation tonight as he sees it. The truth of your life, your marriage, your morality, your thought, your secret thoughts. He knows the condition of the man who is leading the worship here tonight perfectly.

We have a lot of words without knowledge, and I suppose I could feel free to say a lot of worship without worship. I like a God who will demand of us and require an answer, because if he doesn't get it in this life, he'll surely get it in the day of eternity. Will there be a howl and a shriek and a gnashing of teeth When we learn in one fell swoop we have lived consistently beneath the glory of God and hardly took note of the matter, content to coast.

Not only will that strike you in the moment of eternity when you'll see as he sees, but another thing will strike you with equal power. It's too late to remedy it at all. You're fixed eternally in that makeshift slapdash condition to be out in the periphery somewhere and not around the throne of the Lamb charged with and honored by eternal service in ruling and reigning with him from heavenly places.

You blew it and were content to get by, and nobody seemed to notice or require of you, because we made each other the standard of our spirituality, and by that standard it did not seem too conspicuous. Well, you

can read how God speaks to Job and speaks to us, Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if you have understanding. Who hath laid the measure thereof, if thou knowest? Who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Who's laid the cornerstone thereof? When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy, Well, who shut up the sea with doors when it break forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud, the garment thereof, and thick darkness and a swaddling band for it, and break up for it my decreed place and set bars and doors.

It goes on like that. It's a remarkable poetry. It's a sense of God as creator out of nothing.

Ex nihilo. It's a sense of God who is awesome and so beyond ourselves, so beyond Job, so beyond his virtue, so beyond his personal excellence, that the sum effect of God requiring of him and giving him an answer was Job crying out in chapter 42, verse 2, I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withheld from thee. Do you know that? Let every man be a liar, but let God be true.

What's the subtitle of my holocaust paper? Thinking the unthinkable. Do you know why? Because Jewish and Christian theologians are having to reappraise their traditional theologies in the light of the systematic annihilation of the Jewish people and wonder if their doctrine of God is correct. Because how could he be God and be omniscient and know what was taking place and not intervene to stop it? Either he knew it but was powerless to do it, which means to say that he's not omnipotent but impotent, or he could stop it but chose not to, which means that he was unjust and unrighteous and didn't give a rap.

Whichever way you look, God strikes out. There's more subversive things going on in seminaries today than you will know, and it's only a matter of time before it percolates out to the grassroots and infects all the church. The only other explanation is that God was there, that he knew, that he's all-powerful.

He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. But for reasons of his own, he remained silent, chose not to intervene, allowed the systematic annihilation of a people whom he says are the apple of his eye, and that in all their afflictions, he was afflicted. He was not some passive observer who hummed, who yawned while they were being shredded and put in gas ovens and sent up through smokestacks and babies ripped out of their arms and thrown into flaming troughs by the railroad tracks when they came in in their cattle cars more dead than alive.

Why was he silent? Why did he allow it? What is he wanting us to understand from it? And if we don't understand from devastating and ultimate suffering, will we be required to experience yet something worse? Every instance of inexplicable suffering raises the issue of God. And you know what I suspect? Because the issue of God was not raised. Because there were Jewish congregations comparable to your own who were doing their dutiful religious thing, only they did it on Friday night and Saturday morning rather than on Wednesday and Sunday, and went on like that for decades and for generations, speaking about God with words without knowledge, until finally it caught up with them in a devastation calculated to shake them to an awareness that would save them from an eternal holocaust of a fire whose burnings do not cease.

I know that thou canst do everything and that no thought can be withheld from thee. The margin says about that last thing that no thought of thine can be hindered. We're suffering saints from an inadequate knowledge of God.

And we are the house of God, charged with the responsibility to make him known. And these are the last days. And people are perishing everywhere.

The bottom is soon to fall out. In fact, the last time I spoke here, I gave a sense of the prophetic foreshadowing of the decade of the 90s in which I talked about the moral, economic, and political collapse of nations, including our own, the devastating things that would rise out of the debris and the clutter of it, the whole last day's apocalyptic collision between powers of darkness and light, the last shakings and convulsions of an age that is on its way out and under judgment. I hope you're the same congregation.

But we don't have a sense of urgency. We are not able to persuade men, knowing the terror of God, as Paul was. We don't want to think of apocalyptic conclusions to the age that end in fire and elements melting with a fervent heat.

Deep in our secret hearts we're humanists that hope for some kind of progressive improvement that would not require devastating judgments of God. We're charismatic, but we're not apostolic, which wouldn't be bad if we didn't use that apostolic language. We need to know that there's a God who can do everything, that no thought of his can be hindered.

We need to know God. And God's condemnation of Job's friends were that you have not spoken of me, the thing which is right. You spoke about me many right things, but you did not speak of me, for you had words without knowledge.

You did not really know him of whom you were speaking correctly and poetically, and therefore your words were unable to touch my suffering servant and to give him an illumination that would explain the anguish to which he was being passed till I myself required of him and explained to him. And here's the result of when God speaks. This Job says, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes, in verse 6. How do you equate that for a man whom God described at the beginning of the book as a just and upright man? Is there one like him upon the earth who eschews evil and sins not? And this same man, at the end of his devastation, cries out, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes, because in verse 5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.

Okay, you guys. Supposing you had this option tonight, to see God as he in fact is, knowing that there'd be such a shriek out of the deeps of your heart, who are now relatively satisfied with yourself, far less impressive than Job was before God began to work on him. You don't begin to touch the righteousness of Job.

What would your shriek be if God revealed himself as he is? I abhor myself and I repent in dust and ashes. That's not a little catchy phrase. You know what that means? When you put dust on your head, that's dirt.

That means the only place that's fit for you is six feet under. Let every man be a liar, but let God be true. The same thing happened to the prophet Isaiah, who was called the prince of the prophets, when in chapter 6 he saw the Lord high and lifted up and cried out, Woe is me, for I am undone.

I'm a man of unclean lips, and I live in the midst of a people of unclean lips. When he saw the Lord as he is, he saw himself as he is. When Job said, I've heard of you by the hearing of my ear, but now my eye seeth and I abhor.

That means hate, detest myself. I'm a loathsome thing next to the grandeur and awe and unspeakable holiness of a God who can do anything. Who is always right, even in a holocaust, when you can't explain

him.

And unless you start with that premise, you'll never come to the knowledge of the truth that God intended to be found in the ultimate places of suffering and devastation. Don't reason God away. And it was so that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee.

God's not playing here. My divine anger has been ignited against you. Though you were eloquent, though you were poetic, and though you were correct.

To speak about me, you did not speak of me, because your words were without knowledge. And you're trying to console Job and explain to him why it is that as a just man, he's allowed to suffer a holocaust? For you have not spoken of me, the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. What did servant Job speak that God said was right? I abhor myself and I repent in dust and ashes.

This is the only right thing that God could hear from righteous men. And so the Lord turned in verse 10 to captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. And also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

The Lord blessed the latter end of Job in verse 12, more than his beginning. For he had 14,000 sheep and 6,000 camels and 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 she-asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters.

And he called the name of the first Geminon, the name of the second Ketsion, the name of the third Keren-hapuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job. And their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

And after this, after this, Job, lived Job 140 years and saw his sons and his sons' sons even four generations. So Job died being old and full of days. His latter end was more glorious than the beginning.

He began as a just man and he ended as a holy. He had to suffer devastation. His children died inexplicably.

Great winds came and tore the house down and the roof collapsed upon them and upon servants and bands of marauders and murderers came and slew this and that and a whole devastation and a holocaust came upon his children, his property, his own life, his own body that he had to scratch himself with broken pieces of pottery with scabs and itching sores and devastating things from the top of his head to the soles of his feet without explanation. That's what was necessary to bring a righteous man to an awareness of God, of a kind that would otherwise have evaded him except it came through suffering from the hand of God. Do you think it was worth it? And his latter end was more fruitful, more prolific.

God added years to him, more than several lifetimes because something happens when we submit to the hand of God for things that are calculated to bring down what is cheap, superficial, false, play-acting, even sincere. Even our sincerity is not enough. There's a remarkable necessity to lay hold of God in the time that remains in a way that we ourselves would have been too slothful ever to have sought him.

And our worship tonight reveals it. We would have been content to coast but God is bringing you a verbal holocaust as a preliminary and an invitation for a fuller one for those who want to be increased and multiplied and have a length of years for which you can rejoice eternally. Strange, am I speaking mysteries? The Lord wants to turn our captivity, saints, and enable us to pray for others that their captivity

might be turned who are correct.

Even the Jewish people that remain. Our mandate to extend mercy that they might receive mercy, to move them to jealousy, to be to them what only the church is calculated to be at the end of the age, but not a church of false comforters, not a church that is just verbally correct whose words will bounce off of afflicted Jews who cannot understand why they have boils and sores and corruptions and why they've been uprooted and pushed and pursued and in flight. They need a people who know God and can make him known.

And that knowledge of God is not about God and it ain't cheap. It comes out of affliction, it comes out of devastation, it comes out of dealings and trials that God is not required to explain because he does all things well. Because let every man be a liar and let God be true.

Because God is God. Because he created the heavens and the earth and the mysteries of all things and ourselves also. So, what's the use? Shall we pray? Hallelujah.

How could a God who is by definition just and righteous all seeing and all powerful countenance a horror of such magnitude whether it's Job's or Israel's or the church's except that there's an eternity at stake for which we are ill prepared for the world is too much with us and our thoughts are not his thoughts nor are our ways his ways. We need to be devastated, saints. And I'll tell you what, that that devastation is the very mercy of God.

It's the very love of God. It's the very jealousy of God that will not let us go. Who's not content with our sham and with our flim flam because he's the living God.

He's the creator of the heavens and the earth. He's the Holy One of Israel and we have not spoken of him as his servant Job has spoken. We've only spoken words without knowledge.

So, precious God, in Jesus' name I give to you, Lord, this pathetic, strange, deviant night. This little throwaway, hard to be reconciled with the way in which we perceived ourselves and applauded ourselves for our charismatic success enjoying the worship so called. And I ask my God that this strange word tonight, what shall I say let it be a hand grenade with the pin pulled and roll it right down the central aisle of this church and let it go off BOOM! And let there not be one soul in this room who has an inkling of anything disposed toward God who is not fragmented and impacted by some aspect of what has been spoken.

Who has settled on his lease. Whose life is predictable. Whose marriage is humdrum.

Whose worship is banal. Who is not alive to God or to great questions and ultimate questions. Who is not jealous to know Him and to serve Him.

Who is not aware of the things that are eternal. Lord, come, pull the pin and let it go. BOOM! And so, to conclude our little foolish time together, I would just invite anyone who has caught even a piece of the fragment of that grenade to sort of go down before God.

I don't know what you should do. Bow before Him or cry out or get restless or seeking or prostrate and ask God for light more light. My true books are out on the foyer there.

Much more intelligent and understandable than anything I've spoken tonight. And quite anointed and blessed. Thanks for your patience.

In Jesus' name.

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