

The Love of the Truth

by Art Katz

The love of truth is essential for the church to avoid deception and live a life of integrity in the last days.

Duration: 1:13:14

Scripture: 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Discerning Truth", "Spiritual Deception"

Description

This sermon delves into the importance of discernment, the need to seek God's truth beyond mere blessings, and the danger of being deceived by false appearances of spirituality. It emphasizes the significance of knowing God as He truly is, being open to the mysteries of His ways, and the necessity of repentance and a deeper knowledge of the truth to escape the snares of the devil. The speaker challenges the church to examine its foundations, practices, and beliefs, urging a return to a genuine relationship with God and a discerning spirit.

Transcript

Well, again, a place of trembling. If anyone has a prophetic calling, you can observe the pain of it before your eyes. There's a particular kind of anguish that men like myself are required to experience.

We're always somehow on the edge and feeling something and trusting in the spontaneity of God and having to make statements sometimes that we trust are the Lord's. And often or occasionally, there's no immediate vindication or verification. And you simply have to bear the anguish as I have had to experience over the course of years where I've delivered a message that was birthed out of days of fasting and of prayer that went forth in a terrible silence that gave every appearance of failure, of falling flat.

The Lord did not allow me to gesticulate or raise or lower my voice. It was free from any kind of adornment. It was simply the word almost read in a monotone.

And no sooner did I finish and people remained in that terrible silence of disappointment, up came two men through the aisleway of that auditorium before 2,000 people to beckon me to the apron. One man I knew as the young assistant of a well-known internationally known speaker. And he said, Art, he said, this man is a Jewish prophet and he has a word for you from the Lord.

Oh, I said, and I looked at this man who I'd not seen before. He said, yes, I've come to tell you that you have grievously missed the mind of the Lord and done incalculable damage to the body of Christ and need

now to go back to the microphone and recant your entire message. This is the kind of experience that pastors and teachers don't have.

It's reserved for men who are required to make statements of a prophetic kind. And you know what the heck of it is? He might well have been right. That's the anguish, he might well be right.

Five days of fasting and seeking the Lord is no assurance in the last analysis that you are bearing his word. And a man who bears the word of the Lord is continually in that tension. And at any moment, even on the heels of last night's wonderful success, can fall desperately flat.

But it's not the issue of falling flat in the sense of loss of reputation. My God, if I'm still alive to that, I don't deserve even to be in your nation. It's the prospect of doing incalculable damage to the body of Christ.

It's the church falling with the speaker. It's something being sounded that is off and will set in motion reverberations of not a good kind. That's the threshold, that's the no man's land that men of this calling have continually to walk.

So I'm saying all that because I know tonight is another such night. And only the grace of God will bring us through. Thank you.

And this is as much a test upon your hearing as it is upon my speaking. How many here know enough about modern art and impressionism to know what pointillism is? Oh, I'll see you after the meeting. You remember Paul said in Athens, as even your own poets said, Paul was conversant with the culture of which he was contemporary.

We have an obligation like that too. So don't just be a religious dumb-dumb. Pointillism is that kind of painting, I think that the French impressionist artist's name was Seurat, S-E-U-R-A-T, and he painted dabs of color on the canvas.

And the painting had to be interpreted or read or brought together, not by the artist, but by the viewer. You stood back and you found the appropriate distance and you brought the finishing conclusion to the painting by the way in which your eye blended and brought together the points of color. And so something like that tonight, you'll have to bring together the points and assimilate and have a sense of what God may be after, however inadequately expressed it might be.

But I'll tell you this much, dear saints, we need to have a jealousy for the Lord and for his honor and for his name and for his church, that when phenomena begin to take place of the kind that is now current, where there are divisions and strifes and terrible tensions raised of a kind that in my 32 years as a believer, I have never before observed. And that even in this trip, churches canceled or refused to have me unless I could endorse the Toronto blessing. I've never before been faced with a requirement of that kind.

You would have thought that a quarter of a century of preaching around the world and the publication of books would be enough at least to warrant an open door to a man without his having to confirm something of a dubious kind. And so it's just the nature of the thing that a phenomenon like that comes and however painful it is to bring some kind of an assessment, men of the responsibility that I bear are required to attempt it. So what you're going to hear tonight is some reference to that phenomenon, not a total assessment, but raising questions and concerns that are appropriate.

So if you are a devotee and have been blessed, God bless you. It may well be that in his great grace and mercy, despite how men have muddied the waters, he sees your expectant and believing heart and meets you, but that does not in itself constitute a verification of the phenomenon itself. If we love the Lord, his church, and understand that there are things reserved for the church and the church alone that conclude the age, we need to be exceedingly jealous of anything that threatens its character and its call.

Better to err in attempting an assessment than just silently passing over and letting the thing somehow work its way out with whatever incalculable damage that it might do, as well as perhaps good. So are you with me? I mean, even if you're not, I'm still required to go on, but I want you to join me in prayer. Lord, we love you because you're a God who is increasingly addressing us as sons and as daughters.

We love the way you honor us by speaking to us in sober ways that require mature assessment, hearing, response. We love it, Lord, as if you're expecting a church to come of age for whom you have long waited. And we're asking such a word tonight that would move us on in the things, my God, that are appropriate and on time.

Give us a heart, mind, and spirit that can hear and weigh up and assess the kinds of things, my God, that is appropriate to the church that judges righteous judgment, not in condemnation, but in evaluation, in examination, in discernment. For if these are not already the lying signs and wonders of the last days of which you have warned, how long will it be before such phenomena comes of a similar kind? Help us, my God, to exercise our gift of discernment and to grow thereby and to discern the things that are good and evil. We bless you.

We can't expect that from the world, but you can expect it from us by the grace that is given. Let something be spoken tonight, my God, that will bless the Church of New Zealand and perhaps even beyond it. And we thank you and praise you for the privileged occasion, asking that grace that even edits the words out of our mouth and determines not only the content, but the mode and tone of the speaking. For you're the Lord over all.

We give you the praise and the glory. Come now, precious God, speak. Your servants are hearing, and we thank you in Jesus' name, amen.

While I get some water, I think I'm gonna need it. My Adam's apple is already bubbling. You can turn to Isaiah 28, and we'll read almost the whole of that text, which I quoted last night in reading from my most recent newsletter that we publish four times a year, in which I'm examining the increasing plight and dilemma of Israel, making clear my sense of a nation falling into a total deception, that the whole seeking of establishing its security and the preserving itself as a state by negotiating with its avowed enemies gives every appearance of deception.

And that probably the matrix of deception, the auspices, the origin, has got to do with persuading ourselves about something or opening ourselves to something in an indiscriminate way or hoping for something in a wishful way, contrary to truth. So I think that, as the Lord says, the only thing that will keep us from the deceptions to which he himself will abandon us is the love of the truth. Not enough to respect it, but to love it.

And I don't think that we love God any more than we love truth, for he is the truth. And the love of the truth is much more requiring than the respect of the truth. And even it's hard to find that respect in the church, let alone the world, let alone the love.

So I enjoin you to a love for the truth that will save us from last day's deception and enable us to save others who might otherwise be sucked in. There's a book that I've written called The Spirit of Truth. We're out of copies.

I'm told that you can get it in Christian bookstores here. But if you want to get it through us, there's a table out in the foyer on your way out where you can sign up and pay for the book. It'll be mailed you.

It's already en route from Australia where we couldn't carry it up on the plane. Okay, Isaiah chapter 28. Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim and to the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is at the head of the fertile valley of those who are overcome with wine.

Behold, the Lord has a strong and a mighty agent as a storm of hail, a tempest of destruction, like a storm of mighty overflowing waters. He has cast it down to the earth with his hand. The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim is trodden underfoot and the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is at the head of the fertile valley will be like the first ripe fig prior to summer, which one sees and as soon as it is in his hand, he swallows it.

Verse seven, and those also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink. The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink. They are confused by wine.

They stagger from strong drink. They reel while having visions. They totter when rendering judgments.

For all the tables are full of filthy vomit without a single clean place. To whom would he teach knowledge and to whom would he interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk, those just taken from the breast? For he says, order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there. Indeed, he will speak to this people through stammering lips and the foreign tongue.

He who said to them, here is rest, gives rest to the weary and here is a repose, but they would not listen. So the word of the Lord to them will be order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there, that they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared, and taken captive. Therefore, hear the word of the Lord, O scoffers, who rule this people who are in Jerusalem.

Because you have said we made a covenant with death and with Sheol, we have made a pact. The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by, for we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception. Therefore, thus says the Lord God, behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation firmly placed.

He who believes in it will not be disturbed and I will make justice to measuring line and righteousness to level. Then hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies and the water shall overflow the secret place and your covenant with death shall be canceled and your pact with Sheol shall not stand. When the overwhelming scourge passes through, then you become its trampling place.

As often as it passes through, it will seize you. For the morning after morning, it will pass through any time during the day or night and it will be a sheer terror to understand what it means. The bed is too short on which to stretch out and the blanket too small to wrap oneself in for the Lord will rise up as at Mount Peretzim.

He will be stirred up as in the Valley of Gibeon to do his work or his task, his unusual task, his strange work, his alien work, to work his work, his extraordinary work and now do not carry on as scoffers lest your

fetters be made stronger for I've heard from the Lord God of hosts of decisive destruction on all the earth. Well, I quoted that text last night with reference to the Oslo Agreement made between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the PLO, as a refuge of lies and a covenant with death that will not stand and that there will be an overflowing scourge, a devastation that will come and sweep over the nation as the result. There's a remarkable tandem parallel between Israel and the church that should not surprise us and so if Israel is entering into a realm of deception birthed from wishful thinking and humanistic assumptions that if you offer to men some promise of great prosperity of Israel becoming the Hong Kong, the Middle East, the Hong Kong of that area, if only these enemies will give up their belligerence that that hope is itself a lie.

That hope is predicated upon a lie because it does not take into consideration the intransigence of these enemies and their bitter opposition to Israel unto death. It assumes that men will put that away, that Islamic, deadly, demonic spirit bent on Israel's annihilation when you dangle before them the carrot of Middle Eastern prosperity. See what I mean by a lie, by a deception, by a vain hope that men are compelled to turn to in seeking to establish their security independent of God.

It is the last melancholy outworking of the rejection of God and the confidence in oneself as man that Israel is now displaying and will yet become worse before it becomes better. Can that be happening in Israel and that the church itself should be unaffected and not have some kind of corollary of its own where we are operating under some kind of questionable premise and faulty logic and vain hope, moving ourselves to a place of delusion and perhaps deception? That's the question that I'm taking up in this newsletter that has been published and I promised last night I would continue it, now with this part. To what degree is the condition of the church a corollary of that of Israel? Israel's coming disaster is proportionate to its false hope.

Quote, for we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves from ourselves with deception. The overflowing scourge must in the time appointed wash away the lie in a flood of God's judgment because Israel, like the church, must be the ground and pillar of truth. Others can, we cannot.

The lie that an intractable enemy bent upon Israel's destruction could ever be placated by a negotiated peace in the seductive hope of a Middle Eastern Israeli Arab prosperity is that lie. A lie is employing, quote, God as legitimizing the possession of the land without any real regard to him in its conduct or purpose as a nation. I don't want you to miss that.

What is a lie? A lie is when you sanctify or seek to justify your possession of the land on the basis of prophecies that speak about a return and a possession without any true regard to the God who has spoken those words and are simply employing them as a justification for your possession. The issue is not whether the words are true. I want you to understand this.

The issue is your employment of the words in some expediency of self-justification who do not even believe that God has really spoken them. That's a lie and the God of truth will not allow that for a nation that is called with a destiny to bless all the families of the earth. Such fraudulence makes for deception and deception makes for disaster as we shall soon enough, I believe, have occasion to witness.

My question is to what degree are we as the church equally or comparably deceived in our own misconception and misuse of God? If Israel is misusing God to justify its possession of the land, to what degree are we equally in a lie of the misuse of God in the vindication and justification of ourselves? I don't think I have yet recovered from the full gospel breakfast in Germany and the Swedish speaker in his luxurious shirt, I'm sure you would know the company that produces it, its emblem was all over, a good

week's salary at least and he got up by saying, and the Lord said to me this morning and I leaned forward to hear what the Lord said to him and as quickly fell back with a slump in my seat for the Lord had said nothing. It was only, what shall I say, a manner of speaking to give to one's sharing a certain kind of weight that it would not otherwise have had. How dare we say the Lord has said to me when he has not said.

Merely to employ it as an artifice, as a kind of expediency of a kind of religious kind that we hear so often and so frequently we no longer take note. How many things that pass for prophecies are so bogus and so questionable or so clearly out of the flesh and no one says a word as they are spoken publicly and we just nod and go on thinking that we have not paid for that. You need to know that when you take liberties with the issue of truth and allow things to go forth that are not questions or brought to the light, you do not go on as you were before.

It brings an increasing deadening to one's spirit so that you become less able to make discernments and corrections the next time until finally you're totally incapable at all. The love of the truth requires a vigilance for the truth and that is daily and in the last days I would say hourly and moment by moment. That's expensive but there's no cheap way because if we lose that sense, we've lost everything.

We're hollow, we're gongs and cymbals and we have no effect on the society about us. What a melancholy, pathetic end for the church that has turned in on itself and whose last existence is mere succession of services. Who have not even impressed our own children with the seriousness of what we are about let alone the world.

This is called interpolating. You make a reader comment and then as the Lord prompts you add. The fact that we can so much affirm Israel in her era makes me suspicious about the possibility of our own.

When we sanction, support and hope for that peace will really come by the devious means that are being employed. Israel giving away whole segments of her own nation as foothold for intransigent enemies determined on their destruction and we ourselves hope that it's going to work. It's a rather pathetic statement about ourselves as well as them.

And if we can believe for those things for them, my God, what are we believing for ourselves? If we can turn away from truth because of wishful thinking for them, what are we doing with ourselves? What are we on a higher standard? Are we more impeccable in questions that pertain to ourselves when we're so dumb and insensate and dull and with regard to them? No way. The one, the attitude toward them and our discernment toward them is equally toward ourselves and that's what I'm afraid of. Reminiscent of the present blessing emphasis in the church, Isaiah 28 begins with the woe addressed to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim and to the fading flower of its glorious beauty.

Of those who are overcome, the margin says smitten with wine, perhaps all the more because it is quote, a fading flower, unquote, it may be disposed to swallow as soon as it is in its hand, the first ripe fig prior to the summer. What a text and what a field day almost any of us can have with it, it is so suggestive. But here's the suggestion that I would make for you to consider in your own spirit that the fading flower may well be the charismatic movement, the renewal, the kinds of things that excited us in the mid 60s, 70s and into the 80s that seems to be tapering off and coming to the end of itself except that we find some new emphasis that will hopefully revive it.

We simply will not allow it to lapse or pass into the death for which I think God waits that he might take away the first and give us the second. It's almost like flaying a dead horse. Listen, I've been a believer 32 years.

I've grown up with the charismatic movement. I was once it's Jewish darling for short season. And I've been in the full gospel meetings and the Pentecostal and charismatic movements.

My whole history as a believer runs parallel to the rise of those movements. But my sense in recent years is that whatever validity they may once have had and even there, I have some reserve. I'm dubious about the employment of fads, of techniques, of methodologies, of the quick embracing.

This is the clutching of the right fig before it's ripe and swallowing it. So desperate are we for the reviving or the maintaining of something that I believe God is waiting to fall into its death. I can't hear you, brother.

And I can't entertain. I don't want to hear you. I don't want to hear you.

You'll have to sit now. I'm not going to get up very long. I'm going to speak the word of the Holy Spirit.

Yeah, I'm right. I'm taking orders. Where was I? Okay.

So what have we seen? Power evangelism, signs and wonders. You can probably name these things more than I. It's as if we're groping and feeling for something that will hopefully bring a resurgence and an animation or life in something that seems to be progressively expiring. Now, I'm stating my view, but I'm hoping that it's not merely a statement of a subjective view peculiar to myself, but that it's issuing from a prophetic perception in keeping with my call and office.

I trust that that's what it is. And if I'm missing it, I'm missing it, I trust also for the best reasons, the reasons for which God gave to the church, apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and seeking to function in the office given for the church. It's rife with risk.

Yes, I may be offending against the Holy Spirit and opening myself to judgment, but I somehow am compelled to take that risk and trust that God who reads the heart, who understands and knows that there's nothing malicious in the intent, but some attempt to feel our way through a situation where we have not been heretofore and is, what's the word, redolent with all kinds of problems and difficulties in which we need to find our way. I think my greatest concern is that we will become undiscerning, indiscriminating, unquestioning, and by a process, even if the present thing is valid, that has so many things that are questionable about it, what then will be next? If we just condescend to whatever comes and learn to live with it and live with that which becomes normative and then call that the faith. So without doing the text, undo injury or slight, I would ask if this is not a picture of us charismatically grasping for blessing before the time because we are a fading flower in danger of being swallowed up by what we have swallowed.

The thing that we swallowed swallows us according to the text, and it's something that happens before the time and before the fruit is ripe. Now, what's your prophetic interpretation of that, brother? The time is the millennial time, the time of the vindication of God and the blessedness of God for which the present age and hour is preparation and not fulfillment. We are a now generation, and we have not understood that the great saints of faith described in Hebrews chapter 11 all died without having received the promise.

These all died not having received, and that receiving is not the name of the game in this life, but in the life to come as heirs of promise and in the resurrection. And that Abraham even being in the land of promise

was for him a strange land, for it was not the time for its appropriation as blessing. This is a whole other message on eternity that I wish that I could take the time to speak, but ponder those things.

See, there's something wrong with the church in its expectation that more reflects the spirit of the world in immediate gratification now than the deferment of reward that comes after. And if we had that understanding and live by that faith now, now the just shall live by this faith who have hope in a more enduring and eternal substance, our present Christian life would be radically different. And I don't think we would be as susceptible to clutch at anything before it is ripe and swallow it, and in swallowing it, being swallowed.

Because we are a fading flower. Like Israel, instead of ruthlessly examining our root condition, we set ourselves up for a fall in making falsehood our refuge. Are we grasping greedily at a fig, quote unquote, of so-called revival or blessing that swallows the swallower when it is the whole unreal constitution of ourselves as church, its life, its premises, and practices that needs to be examined? That for me would be revival.

But to have an unexamined life of which even the great spokesmen of the world tell us that the unexamined life is not worth living, and that the church should not examine its premises, its conditions, its present status, its deviation from apostolic reality and truth, and welcome blessing of a questionable kind and have its ability to discern dulled by the absence even of the attempt, and if someone else should venture the attempt, they're threatened with judgment that will come down from God because you're blaspheming the Holy Spirit or you refuse to speak, you're forbidden to speak unless you can endorse. I wanna read this again. Are we grasping greedily at a fig of so-called revival or blessing that swallows the swallower when it is the whole unreal constitution of ourselves as church, its life, its premises, and practices that needs to be examined? Our haste in celebrating clairvoyant trivia as the gift of prophecy, do you know what I'm talking about? What do you mean by trivia, brother? I mean the man who's called the oracle of the hour to whom we run in great numbers to find out that God knows us by name and has a personal word of prophecy for us and can assure us about some condition of our own life or home from the future that we think makes that man a prophet.

He may well not be a prophet at all. It may be the gift of knowledge that is being exercised and we must not dismiss the possibility that it is not even a gift of God but some clairvoyant ability to know something about others which we have indiscriminately swallowed because at least we're being known by name so God must know us and we're so terribly insecure and want the assurance that God knows us that we'll run greedily to such men in the hope that some word will come from them that will confirm that we are known of God. Our haste in celebrating clairvoyant trivia as the gift of prophecy, worse as the prophetic office itself, we can't even distinguish between the gift of prophecy and the office of prophet and I can't think of a more deadly confusion.

And the men who are practicing these gifts of knowledge or gift of prophecy allow themselves to be understood and received as oracles. Listen, dear church, we are built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets and oy vey, you know this Jewish expression? If we indiscriminately use the word prophet to describe something that is not God's definition, if there's a false foundation, what shall we expect of the superstructure that will be built upon it? I can't think of a more important requirement for the church today than to discern, to appreciate and to understand what indeed is actually prophetic and what indeed is dubious, if not worse. If we lose that, we open the door for the denigration of the church itself and I'm afraid that that door has already been opened.

What our haste in construing flamboyance as anointing and the gift of gab as preaching, religious manipulation as the moving of the spirit, amplified noise as worship, shallow boisterous camaraderie as fellowship makes me suspicious whether our foundation is really upon the costly cornerstone laid in Zion. You say, brother, you really have a flair for words and there's a certain element of exaggeration in all you're saying. Yes, that's called hyperbole.

It's a certain liberty God gives to bring a more penetrating sense by exaggerating it. Okay, so maybe it's a little extreme but it raises the question of what we have been celebrating as prophetic and as worship and as fellowship in ways that are long overdue for our examination. Not only are we not capable of recognizing the prophetic office and confuse it with the gift but we're not capable of recognizing anointing and confuse it with flamboyance.

We're not capable of recognizing spirit and confuse it with soul. And when we come to that, we're on the way out. I recommend heartily Watchman Nee's book written in 1933, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, who was warning us even then about manifestations that have since come to pass far in excess of anything that he could have known at that time about soul being manipulated through music, through amplifiers, sound itself and its effect on soul to move people to certain kinds of responses of an emotional kind, which they think to be in the spirit that have not to do with the spirit at all.

Are you guarding jealously your spirit? Can you distinguish the one faculty from the other? And are you easily moved upon and swept up into a kind of enthusiasm and response because everyone else about you is moved and affected and how shall you be unmoved except you keep your heart with all diligence. You wanna know what painful is? Painful is to be in the midst of a so-called revival phenomenon and to be the only one apparently who is unmoved and whose face shows it. I was a dead lump at my publisher's own conference in the gallery for the celebrities where I was brought walking in after its beginning and heard a message that I could hardly say amen to.

And then the speaker said, and now I'm going to ask anyone who wants the spirit of prophetic something or other to stand. And when he said that my spirit fell rather than rose, I had a sense of unease in the inner man. And then he said, if you're sitting by someone who stands, please stand with them and pray for them.

I said, Lord, keep me from that. I don't want to move and be prompted by men and cued by men because of their anticipations to make a response that my spirit is not comfortable with. And sure enough, a man sitting right alongside me in the minister section stands and there I'm sitting like the dead lump and easily viewed from the platform as certainly not going along with what is taking place.

Your face prickles with heat and under your collar, you feel like a detestable lump and all eyes are upon you until finally you're so unmoved. Someone has got to come down from the platform and pray for that man alongside whom you are sitting. Listen, saints, that's why love of the truth is the requirement.

It's going to bring embarrassment, reproach. We're going to look offensive. We're going to be seen to be opposing God.

And can you bear that? You nice New Zealand saints. If someone looks at you cross-eyed, you're thrown into a panic that would take days to recover. Can you bear being misunderstood? Can you bear reproach? Can you trust the witness of your spirit and what has been nurtured in your relationship with God over a span of years as being so dear and so holy that it is not to be opened for anything that seems to be

passing in the moment that is exciting others.

If your spirit is numb and is not being affected, you don't open yourself to be participant for it will be corruptive. Conversely, I have been on a platform in California, at a Pentecostal church, and the worship was deafening. I was ready to clutch the microphone and to call them to order when within moments of that noise, the spirit of God was communicating to my spirit that it was holy, holy, holy, and issued out of genuine hearts before God.

There's difference between noise and noise. And can you sense by your spirit, the issue of spirit, and the kinds of things that require these discernments? We will not be capable of those discernments if we are not practicing them. And if there is not a reservoir of knowledge of God in the innermost place, what is the phrase that John the Australian brother likes? The authentic center.

Do you have one? I tell you, dear saints, I have been nurturing those occasions in God by which he has revealed himself as holy. The few rare occasions over 32 years of a perilous walk with him, I cherish and I keep. And I make that the index and the test of what is presently taking place if it is compatible with what I already know as God.

And if it doesn't meet that test, I don't open myself for it. You think I'm being unduly cautious? I'm keeping myself for your sake. Have the decades of charismatic pomp, adulation of wigged, mascara-laden hostesses.

Maybe this is not part of your New Zealand experience, but it certainly is part of our American tell evangelist experience. The rejection of the cross and the rejection of suffering. This has been the faith and prosperity generation of the calculated use of hype, the idolizing of prosperity and faith as manipulation.

Have all these things taken its toll? Are what we reaping now the sum effect of a rather callow and indiscriminate charismatic generation where we have been impressed by personalities and have gone along and now we're reaping what we have carelessly sown. I'm raising that question. That there has been a rejection of the cross in the rejection of suffering.

And some of the most notable American television personalities have even accused Paul of missing it and submitting himself to undue suffering. Had he had a greater knowledge, he would not need to have suffered at all. As they certainly don't, but will in the day of eternity, I think.

Whatsoever we have been sowing, we are reaping. And we're reaping something that is the consummation of an entire generation of the last 25 or 30 years of a certain kind of carelessness, a certain kind of hype, certain kind of practice, until finally it takes its toll in the way that I think we may now be experiencing. When the Lord had me to exhort and to rebuke the worship of a certain church on this trip, that it was so painful, had they gone on with one more chorus, I would have been demolished in my spirit and incapacitated to bring the word.

When worship has that effect on the speaker and the bearer of the word, we might well question exactly what kind of worship that is. And on another occasion like it, the precious young worship leader said, but Artie said, I have had no other model. And that's true.

We emulate the models. And by such a means, the thing spreads and becomes normative through all the church. For where are their worship leaders who are worshipers, who know God in their own privacy and in their own closet? And bring that precious sense of himself, painfully obtained in the seeking of him,

which is the cross, and then leading us into realms inspired by that kind of communion.

Most have not that knowledge and have not sought him, and therefore are required to emulate the models of the age that are given, and only to do it a little better than the next guy, which means a little longer and a little noisier. So on what basis do we discern, evaluate, and accept as blessing what may be dubious or counterfeit when our priests reel with wine and stagger from drink? They reel while having visions, they totter when rendering judgment. A precious commentator on Isaiah on this text, long before our generation, who was writing also in the 1930s, translates reel and stagger as stupefied by excess, turning the amplifier up a little louder.

Confused by wine, as spiritual toppler, and they totter when rendering judgment as lying prostrate in their shame. Is this not too frighteningly an apt description of what we have too indiscriminately celebrated as God? Yet, little wonder that verse nine asks, to whom would he teach knowledge, and to whom would he interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk, those just taken from the breasts? Little wonder that a generation too long malnourished in the word, and poorly enough birthed with congenital defect into the faith, in the end stumble backward, are broken, snared, and taken captive. The appropriateness of these words today for both Israel and the church is sobering, if not chilling.

As for the world itself, what can be hoped for there? I mean, if the church and Israel are in this condition, what could be hoped for in the world? The world itself is predicated upon the lie, and hurdles even now to its doom, drunkenly in frenzied fortune-making, and vacuous politicizing, while the dark clouds of its coming judgments gather. It may be that you're a little behind other nations in this, but being a nation, it will not take you all that long to catch up. The subterranean rumblings beneath the earth, saturated in the blood of violence, sounds the imminent judgment and doom of nations.

And even this text, in the last verse I read, verse 22, for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts of decisive destruction on all the earth. We are moving toward the day of the Lord's wrath and judgment. He has been patient and forbearing, but I believe that it's coming in an earth saturated with the blood of violence.

In the meanwhile, it holds its breath for the coming out of the newest design of fashions, greedily devours the adulterous scandals of the royal house, multiplies its billionaires and barren kings of sport, whose millions are made in seconds, drinks up the moral vomit of talk shows. This is what we have in American TV, unbelievable and scandalous talk shows where the most intimate questions of sex and intimacy are made a public conversation and they're coaxed and prompted into most degrading kinds of confessions about their private practices. And this is becoming one of the most powerful forms of entertainment in America in so-called talk shows.

And now every network is in competition with the other to come up with a talk show yet more scandalous than the other because millions of dollars ride on the advertising revenue of those who have the highest rating and popularity because they are the more scandalous and the more obscene. This is written essentially for American believers. You can pray for the church in America.

And I think that will soon become the church everywhere. So it numbs its mind with so-called entertainment and suckered into the resurrection of the Beatles. Did you notice that? That these men have taken up off the shelf in their middle age and come up with some kinds of things that were never played in their earlier days of fame and fortune and issue records and a disc and tapes that have already made millions on the day of their availability.

What a bunch of suckers in the world who can take up this will that of anything that has any promise of novelty against the engulfing boredom of self. And I think that the condition of such a world will be laid at the door of the church. There's a relationship between its condition and our forfeiture of an authentic faith that would not have allowed the church to the world this degradation.

For we are called to be ourselves a holy priesthood and to teach the people the difference between the holy and the profane, the sacred and the unclean. If we ourselves are losing our own ability to discern these things in the church, how shall we teach those that are in the nation? And the condition of the nation reveals our failure in that priestly function. I'm quoting from Oswald Chambers as I come to the end of the statement.

If you read my utmost for his highest, I hope that you will. I don't allow a date to pass in my morning devotional time without reading his selection for that day. And so I'm just paraphrasing a little bit in a statement that he makes for November 29th when this letter was written out of his book, my utmost for his highest.

The charismatic evangelical movements of today have none of the rugged reality of the New Testament about them. There is nothing about them that needs the death of Jesus Christ. All that is required is a pious atmosphere and nominal prayer and devotion.

This type of experience is not supernatural nor miraculous. It did not cost the passion of God. It is not dyed in the blood of the lamb nor stamped with the hallmark of the Holy Ghost.

It has not that mark on it, which makes it and men say, as they look with awe and wonder, this is the work of God Almighty. So the heart of the matter and the real issue is the knowing of God as God and not as we have supposed them to be. I am persuaded that the whole low standard that opens the doors for deception and thinking something to be of God is our failure to know God rightly.

And it's not every failure, whether it's of present Israel, the church, to failure to know God in this way. The key to all, quoting this brother Jennings, whose commentary in Isaiah I've already quoted, lies in the king revealed. And as he is thus revealed, so was everything in his kingdom exposed in its true colors.

Can we grant that every error in the last analysis is in proportion to the want of that true relational knowledge of him as king? We don't know even as we ought to know. And what is all the more pathetic is that we think we know. A key here might lie in the phrase, as he is thus revealed, that is revealed as king, seen in the fullness of the theocratic context, which the church has not historically and presently considered.

That was this afternoon's subject, the coming of the king with Israel's restoration. And because of our loss of the issue of Israel and Israel's place in God's theocratic rule over the nations, we have lost the sense, not only of the kingdom, but of the king. Somehow it is inexorably tied in with the issue of Israel, and we have lost it in proportion as we have lost Israel.

This necessarily requires a seeing of Israel's millennial destiny as the theocratic center of that world rule. Is it not for that reason that Paul in Romans implores the church not to be ignorant of this mystery, lest we become wise in our own conceits? Notice that that's a plural word, not just a conceit about Israel, but conceit even about God. Is it not equally our conceit that assures us that something must be of God because of ostensible blessing? Is that all it takes to persuade you that something is of God because there

is an apparent blessing? If that is your only criterion, you're already on dangerous ground that leads to deception or is already deception.

The enemy can well simulate and bring apparent blessing, even bring release from things that have agitated and marred the life of believers. And if we constitute that as being the necessary evidence of God because it is a relief or a release or an apparent blessing, we are already on dangerous ground. There must be something beyond blessing that persuades us that something is of God.

And that rests on the knowledge of God himself as God and not on the blessing that he seems to confer. This is a kind of presumption of that Zionist Israel is practicing in her assurance that her ultimate security for peace is certain or deserved because anything else would be unthinkable. It's hard for Israel to think the unthinkable.

It's hard to think that God would allow after a half century of political existence, the devastation and the demise and expulsion again of that nation. But is it any harder than conceiving of the God who allowed the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC or in 70 AD where the blood was as high as the horse's bridles and over a million were killed and the rest plunged into exile? I think that the love of the truth requires us to have a capacity to think the unthinkable. And when we draw a line and we say, I will not consider that we are already on dangerous ground that is presumptuous against God.

How many of you know the name Elie Wiesel, the great honored Jewish writer of the Holocaust whose book, *The Night*, I would commend to you as one of the most searing descriptions of the Holocaust in which his entire family was wiped out at Auschwitz. He alone is the sole survivor. And he has become the most recognized Jewish writer on the Holocaust.

And I once had an opportunity to hear him speaking publicly. And then there was a question and answer time and the Lord did not allow me to ask him publicly. But when it was over, I went up to him and I said, in your talk, you mentioned that you're meeting twice a week with a rabbi in the study of scripture.

May I ask to what degree are you willing to consider that our Jewish history of calamity and even of the recent Holocaust itself is the fulfillment of judgments promised in the concluding chapters of Deuteronomy and Leviticus that would afflict us in the last days. He looked at me, time stood still, frozen and he spoke this imperishable answer. I refuse to consider that.

It's not that it may not be true, but it is unthinkable for me. And I establish the standard of what I will accept and consider from even the scripture itself. I exalt myself and I will determine what is valid and what is worthy of consideration or not.

I refuse to consider that. Well, I subsequently wrote a paper on the Holocaust and in my usual prophetic way, you know what I said? If there were no other justification for the Holocaust as judgment, that would be justification enough. The exaltation of man over God, determining what he will accept as being valid in God's word.

I wonder to what degree we are practicing that and are refusing to think the unthinkable. Are we willing to consider the unthinkable thing that we may not know God as we thought? I tell you, I had a stunning impression not long ago in a church much like this, where all of a sudden the thought came to me, what prevents there from being wholesale deception, not just in the Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormon congregations, but in the congregation of the Orthodox? Is it possible to hold correct creedal statements

and be Orthodox in our creed and yet be as effectually deceived as someone who is in doctrinal error? And I believe the answer is yes, and more than that, that that deception is more deadly than the other. That we can err in spirit while we yet hold the creedal statements that are true, but our life is not true and our practice is not true.

And we're living a kind of life thinly garnished over with yeas and amens that we don't in our deepest hearts believe. We don't know God as we ought or as we, and he is not as we thought him to be. He is more likely to be revealed in the place where we would least look for him, in his judgments.

We don't wanna turn aside and look into the burning bush of yet unresolved questions that still continue to burn and to consume for God is in the midst of that fire. We will not turn aside to see and look into the kinds of gritty, painful questions, the Holocaust, the coming Holocaust that will eclipse the past Holocaust. We put blinders on and we don't want our serenity and our peace disturbed, but go on with a wishful thinking about an Israel on its path to disaster because it is unthinkable to us that it should take place.

Is God going to allow all those Russian Jews to come back and Ethiopians only to face disaster? I wouldn't presume to tell God what he can and cannot do in the light of calamity that has already been our historic experience and will be again. To become wise in one's own conceit, which is the judgment from not understanding the mystery of Israel, somehow so much is tied up with our apprehension of that mystery, not just for Israel, but for everything. To lose it is to make ourselves candidates for deceit.

To become wise in one's own conceit is to lose not only the knowledge of God about Israel, but the knowledge of God about God, seeing that nothing more reveals him as God than the mystery of Israel's restoration by his mercy and through his power after millennia of apostasy. The greatest revelation of God is in his dealings with Israel, particularly in judgment. And if we fail to consider that because it is too painful or we have no disposition and we don't like to consider a God who judges, and how is that compatible with his mercy and his goodness and his love? It jars our comprehension of God, and we don't want that comprehension jarred.

And therefore we divorce ourselves and omit the God who is himself a seamless garment. You can't divorce God from his judgments and yet have the God who is God. And that we have done more than we know.

So he would not have us to be ignorant of this mystery implies that our historic and present ignorance has been willful, because he says, I would not have you to be ignorant. Well, how come then we are ignorant if he would not have us to be? Because it's a willful omission, it's a willful disregard of something that we have not sought or been in a spirit to receive as revelation of mystery. The knowledge of Israel and Israel's future is not to be intellectually obtained.

It's a mystery and mysteries can only be revealed by the spirit and are given by those who can receive them and have a disposition of spirit for that revelation. But where God sees arrogance, where he sees disdain and contempt, where he sees exaltation of race or nation above Israel and the unwillingness to consider that lowly and despised people, he withholds the revelation of it. I know some of the greatest men of God who have said to me, Romans 11 has always been for me a complete mystery.

I simply do not understand it. And a very famous international speaker who came to our church when I was yet a young believer and made the most devastating statements about Israel as being finished in the purposes of God, that I smarted in my spirit, but I was too young in the faith to be able to give any answer.

The Lord had not yet revealed to me.

But some months later, there we were as speakers at a Jesus rally and staying at the same facility. And I came down for breakfast, one place open next to him at the table. And in our conversation, I said, you may well be right.

I can't contest. I don't have the knowledge to challenge you that Israel may well be finished in God's sight. But I think that the spirit of your speaking about that and the gloating about Israel's demise disqualifies you from any revelation if God has some other intention.

You are enjoying Israel's fall. And that gloating and that superior and disdainful enjoyment disqualifies you from the revelation of a mystery that might yet remain. Of course, the fact that he was English was not significant and quite coincidental.

So he would not have us to be ignorant of a mystery. And may God give us the grace to be open, to understand that we might be able to teach and be patient when wronged and with gentleness instruct those that oppose themselves. If God perhaps will give them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth about God for the knowledge of the truth about God is the key to everything.

To lose that is to lose everything. That they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil having been held captive by him at his will. So I'm often jealously praying, Lord, beyond even the word, will you communicate something with the word of the sense of yourself to us who have lost it or have never known it.

We do not know you as we ought. And that puts us in the most precarious danger and condition of susceptibility to deception for which the greatest safeguard is the knowledge of God, not as we think him to be, but as he in fact is. I wanna make that my prayer in conclusion.

It's the revival of this that I yearn for in the church, which I don't think will come until we're willing to be ruthlessly honest about our own condition as the church and the departure and deviation from things apostolic and holy that we have allowed to be dismissed as only historical and not required to see as being the truth of our present condition and walk and service. Well, if that doesn't make sense to you, hear the tape again and pray for this fluttering reed who is walking a tightrope with a balancing pole, not just for himself to come over to the other side, but for all the church. Let's pray.

So precious God, I thank you for an occasion that has come that you yourself have provided with evidently a congregation of saints, mature enough to consider the kinds of things that you have given me the freedom to express. And I'm not saying, thus saith the Lord, I may well have to stand here and someone will come up this aisle and say to me, I'm a prophet sent from God to tell you you have grievously missed the mind of God and have done incalculable damage and may well be right. But I have to trust and risk speaking.

I have to suffer the prophetic anguish because there's a moment that comes when you're required to speak and you may well be wrong, but God forbid that we should withhold the speaking that you're calling for in the moment of your appointment and time. And Lord, we're asking mercy. We're asking grace.

We have not been in a place like this heretofore. The issues are so subtle. The vehemence of men is so angry.

The divisiveness is so severe. We've not seen this kind of thing. And we're asking Lord that you would help us and take the statement that was made and let us chew the meat of it and spit out the bones.

Enable us to have an ability to discern even what has been spoken. It makes a requirement of us and we're not used to be required of. We're used to sitting in anonymity in the pews and nodding and saying amen and going home.

Come precious God, have a church again whose whole body is an agent of discernment because it is coming to the maturity of sons. Bless these children Lord and the words that have been spoken. Let them wrestle with it and contend with it and bring forth my God through it what you will in your great jealous love over the church.

We bless you, we trust you, we look to you. Bless the Church of New Zealand as of all nations for the soon requirement that will come to it that will be so utterly demanding in the Jews of the last days in their perilous flight from persecution for which we are now presently unprepared. May they find a people mature, stable, discerning and who know God and can make him known to a people who are called to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

Oh Lord, grant us an increase in the knowledge of God as God. Give us the sense of yourself my God that is holy. Bring again the sense of awe and reverence for a God who will not allow men to bellow as animals in the name of blessing we don't think.

It's incompatible with what we understand your nature and character to be and if we are in error about that, instruct us. We bless you for your love that will not let us go and pray that the word, however defective, however questionable, yet has your blessing for the risk of it born out of that love and will be a washing of the water of the word for the church that we might one day be before you as a bride without spot, without blemish, without wrinkle or any such thing. Oh precious God, help us as we take tentative fluttering steps in all of the frailty of our humanity, trusting the God of truth.

Bless this night, bless these words. Use them as you will. We thank you and give you the praise for the preciousness of the occasion and your address to us as sons and daughters of God.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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