

~Other Speakers G-L: Art Katz:

The theme of the principalities and the powers of the air is foundational to all true seeing. The remarkable thing, though, is that it has to do with something totally invisible. There is a whole realm of invisible, angelic 'spirit-entities,' who have a profound influence over the conduct and course of individuals and nations. This topic is both difficult, and complex in every way. It is difficult because it is unfamiliar to us, and complex because it is strenuously opposed by the same powers of darkness.

It is extraordinary how naive, ignorant, and indifferent the church is toward the powers of darkness, despite the fact that this theme is absolutely foundational to the whole calling of the church! It is a perspective that pertains to the whole of reality, and of what God is about. The church has characteristically majored in the minors, and has ignored this major theme. All of our activity, therefore, is condemned to a certain kind of futility and fruitlessness. We dissipate our energy away, and walk on a horizontal level, and in an earthly way. Paul reminds us that we wrestle not against flesh and blood:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

This struggle, or wrestling, is something to be entered into by the corporate activity of believers together in Christ. It is our struggle. So who are these principalities and powers and the world forces of this darkness in the heavenly places? There is a whole realm of mystery here. The heavenlies that are referred to are not the ones that describe God's dwelling place. There is a certain order of beings in the very atmosphere, who brood over the earth, namely, the rulers or powers of the air. They are the rulers of this present world darkness. They preside in a kind of layer over the earth, and yet influence the conduct of men, and the things that take place in the earth.

In this verse there are five references to the word 'against.' We need to know that there is a war on, and that it has been on for thousands of years. It is a cosmic conflict between the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of God. If we think that the subject of demons is only the issue of personal deliverance, we have completely missed the greater importance. These principalities and powers would like for us to be totally caught up at the level of individual demon deliverance—as if that represents the whole issue. I am not invalidating deliverance for individuals, but it has fixed the understanding of the church at that level, and robbed it of the greater and truer understanding of the conflict, namely, the contention for the actual dominion or possession of creation and the nations. It may well be that the stratagem of these powers is to get us to be occupied at the level of personal deliverance rather than to be occupied with combat in the cosmic sense. There is a final defeat that needs to be inflicted upon them, which can only come by virtue of the church being the church in the apostolic sense.

If we want to understand the faith, and the church, we must understand it in the context of the conflict with the principalities and powers, or we simply do not understand it at all. If the church has not recognized the presence over their community of this invisible realm of spirit reality, and has not addressed that realm, and broken its influence over the community where they seek to labor, then they labor in vain. There is an episode in Daniel's life in which he prayed, yet it took three weeks for him to receive an answer. When the angel of the Lord came to Daniel, he told him that from the moment he, Daniel, opened his mouth, he was heard, but that the prince of Persia had contended and delayed his coming. So we are not talking about something imaginary; it is very real, and though it is an invisible realm, it has very practical consequences in the earth and with men.

As mentioned, this requires the church to be the church. If the church is only an institution, where people come to attend services, and sit in a kind of audience of isolated individuals, then it is not equipped for this struggle. This struggle requires the church to be the church in the sense that God intended it—not what we have made it. Unless the church is a "we," then it cannot engage in this struggle, and that is why the principalities and powers will do anything to divide the church, and divide individuals. They want to keep the church from becoming the corporate expression of the Life of God that can wrestle. We ourselves need to understand that, and give ourselves to seeing that the church comes to this kind of reality. It is contrary to our own flesh, because it requires time, it will mean the loss of privacy, and the opening of ourselves to things that might be embarrassing. We prefer the church in its present configuration. We like to be anonymous and see someone else 'do it,' and yet say our "Amen" and "Hallelujah." We do not want to be required of. But if we are going to be the church that brings glory to His name, and defeats the principalities and powers, then we ourselves must struggle against our own flesh, and our own unwillingness.

This is an apostolic view of the church as God intended it from the beginning. Apostolic is a certain view of reality, a certain mindset, a perception of things, particularly of the things that are not seen. It is a view of the church set in a cosmic context that sees a struggle that has gone on since the beginning of time. There was a rebellion in heaven, and one third of the angelic host followed their prince and rebelled against God. That rebellion continues until this day. All things were created by God, even these principalities and powers. They are an angelic creation, a 'spirit order' that was given initially by God for His own purposes. They have rebelled, however, against their Creator, and have therefore become a fallen angelic order.

The Fall

We have not sufficiently understood the meaning of the Fall. It was not only Adam and Eve, but very creation itself that was affected by the Fall. The Fall was the most significant tragedy, the greatest collapse, and the greatest catastrophe in the history of creation. The Fall brought the entire creation into corruption, including the angelic realm. These fallen angels, under the leadership of Satan, still maintain their governmental places. They were designed and created in the realm over the earth to aid and abet the redemptive work of God in the earth, by bringing a certain kind of order through their influence. It was to be a benign influence in accordance with the purposes of God, that men would have an atmosphere hospitable to finding God, to knowing Him, and to coming into His salvation. Though they were intended as a benign influence in the aiding of God in His purposes, they have now, in their rebellion against the purposes of their Creator, taken unto themselves their own purposes. Their ruler Satan seeks to be deified, and to turn the loyalties and attention of men unto himself, and to establish his own values contrary to God's, and thus turn men away from God. They have taken their governmental place, and used it for themselves to become the gods of this world.

We can see it, for example, in race and nation. God created races and nations, but not to become idolatries as things in themselves. This was clearly revealed in the Nazi time, when the nation Germany became elevated above God. There were principalities and powers playing upon nationality to bring the worship and attention of men to themselves. The very German theologians, who would not consider this subject, had to experience these powers in the paganism, the violence, and the death that characterized Nazi Germany. When those powers broke through, they turned the loyalties of men to themselves, in the name of race and nation. They established a new order that was a perverse, antichrist distortion.

Someone has wisely said that Germany lost World War II, but the same powers of darkness that precipitated it remain unchallenged to this day. The Nazi regime was defeated militarily, but the spirit powers, who expressed themselves through that nation to the virtual destruction of the civilized world, prevail still. The same spirits hover over that nation^{3/4} and all nations^{3/4} waiting for the conditions again by which they can come and manifest themselves, even to the turning of a nation to the most satanic purposes. We would be foolish and naive to continue in a willful ignorance of these realities.

We have no idea of the influence of the principalities and powers. Nazism took hold, not in some primitive nation, but in the most eminent and prominent civilization of all nations. What is more, it took as little as ten years. They went 'too far' and revealed themselves, not being satisfied merely to exert their influence invisibly, but took captive the whole organ of state. If we fail to understand what the Nazi phenomenon means, we will continue in an ignorance that for us will be tragic. What took place in Nazi Germany was a preview of Last Days' antichrist reality. The things that have been veiled and concealed are being unveiled and revealed in open antagonism against God. We are coming to the final showdown in which the principalities and powers will be seeking complete domination over this cosmos at the end of the age.

God has created this governmental realm to sustain creation, but the powers of the air function today in opposition to what was divinely and originally assigned them. They behave as though they were the ultimate ground and reason for being. They gave to themselves a power beyond God's intention, namely, to be seen as something ultimate. And they have taken the things that God intended as ultimate and made them to be irrelevant, like for example, eternity. They have turned the whole value system the wrong way up. When the apostles came into the world, they turned the world upside-down. They brought back the original and Divine perspective for creation, which had been lost, because the whole of creation and nations had come under this demonic order. They were reversing the true values for which God gave the creation.

You say, "Just how influential are these spirit powers?" They were sufficiently influential to crucify Christ:

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (1 Corinthians 2:6–8)

Paul is not speaking here of Pontius Pilate, or even the Sanhedrin, but the 'rulers of this age.' They are the principalities and powers of the air, who are invisible and super-terrestrial (beyond the earth), and who operate through worldly and earthly authorities^{3/4}though they be ignorant of their influence. They expressed their rule through Pontius Pilate, and through the Sanhedrin. In other words, they expressed themselves through the very best of religious and civil government. Roman law and authority was considered to be the epitome of civilized law. Much of present day legal jurisprudence is derived from Roman law. The Roman law and Jewish religion, that is to say, the 'best' of both worlds, conspired together to crucify the Lord of glory. But they themselves were inspired by the rulers of this age. If the powers had understood the wisdom of God, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. They acted out of their own wisdom, and it is a wisdom that employs force, intimidation and threat of death.

The powers are characteristically cynical and unbelieving, profoundly egotistical and vain. Though God says they will meet defeat, they do not believe it about themselves. They act with a presumption and arrogance contrary to what God says concerning their fate and destiny.

But you (Satan) said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." (Isaiah 14:13–14)

And God answers,

Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit. (Isaiah 14:15)

That presumption and that arrogance are at the heart of the character of the powers of darkness. The whole fallen angelic realm has the character of Satan himself, and will suffer the eternal fate with Satan in the Lake of Fire. They know, but they do not know, so to speak, because had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But it was a hidden wisdom in the intention of God. In being slain from the foundations of the world, the Lord already, in His marvelous wisdom, foresaw and ordained that His Son would come and die, but it was a hidden wisdom that the powers could not see, though they are cunning. We are told to be aware of the wiles of the devil. He is cunning, crafty, and very clever. He was once the anointed cherub and angel of light, having a remarkable brilliance, but it will yet be his undoing, because his character contradicts his gift. That is also the undoing of any of us when our character is not in keeping with our gifting or our calling.

The Cosmic Setting

Even the word 'cosmic' is alien to the consciousness of the church. We do not think in cosmic terms, but first in personal terms, then local, then national, and maybe with some regard to the world. Cosmic, however, is beyond all of these categories, yet includes them all. The apostolic view is a cosmic view, and yet I do not even know how to define the word cosmic. It is more than just interplanetary. It is the total setting of the redemptive work of God in creation as described in Ephesians 3:8–12:

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

This is so important in the sight of God that it was not, in His opinion, too extravagant to create all things that this could be performed. This one thing will revolutionize our entire perspective about God, for He has purposes unto Himself, that have absolutely nothing to do with the benefits we receive as being the church, or that will even be experienced in the world. There is nothing here about what will happen to benefit the world. It is solely and exclusively something that satisfies the heart of God. Moreover, it is so important that He created all things in order that now this thing might be performed through the church.

In other words, the whole of creation in God's sight was to make possible the church. This is turning everything upside-down. The world thinks that it was created for itself. It thinks that it can have its great cities, its commerce, its trade, its culture, and all of the things that men celebrate. The world sees the church as a 'Sunday thing' that society is willing to allow to exist, as long as it does not bother mankind and the things that are important to themselves. This is contrary to what God says. The church itself does not see this, but rather sees herself as established to provide men with certain blessings by meeting their needs. That is a grotesque distortion, and is not the purpose for which God has established the church. Church is not something that panders to men; it is not something institutional that has been established to requite the interests of men by establishing programs and services. The church at large, even in its best forms, has regrettably come to that pitiful condition, exactly for the absence of the knowledge of the eternal purpose of God for the church. In fact, until we identify with the eternal purpose of God, and look to the fulfilling of it, we never will meet the needs of men. Once we see this, we begin to realize that our jobs and careers are all secondary, the merest provisions from God, in order to keep body and soul together.

Why is the church so itchy and always wanting to find something to do? Why must it always have a program, or something to justify its existence? Perhaps the answer lies in that it does not see its existence in any other terms but in meeting the needs that are immediate and about them. It has not seen what would have given it its security and foundation in God, namely, the taking up of the eternal purpose. It would have freed it from the necessity and the itch to do and perform.

I cannot say enough to register this upon our spirits. If this does not find a place in our hearts and understanding, we are crippled in our service for God, as well as our knowledge of God. We need to understand the cosmic context of the entire faith itself, and that there is a drama of a moral and cosmic kind that has had its inception from the beginning, and is moving toward its conclusion. And the final drama is to be fulfilled by the church itself.

Since the church does not float in the air, but has its being on the earth, God created the earth in order that, through the church, a certain demonstration could be made. In other words, our whole view of creation has got to be related to our whole view of redemption. God did not create all things in order that we could enjoy the benefits of the earth, although it has been given to be enjoyed. His purpose is that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be demonstrated to the principalities and the powers of the air. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the eternal purpose of God for creation, and for the church. The church that chooses to be ignorant of the eternal purpose of God, and does not give itself to that purpose as the first and foremost purpose for its being, is, by that selfsame thing, not the church. The church that is indifferent to the eternal purpose of God, let it be however impressive in every other way, is not the church in any apostolic and prophetic sense, which is to say, in any authentic sense. In order to be the church that is the church in truth, we must embrace the eternal purpose of God, even though we do not see any practical consequence for doing so. In fact, we will find that God's purpose does not in any way serve our purposes. It does not aid mankind, or seem to alleviate any present ill in the world. It is altogether a mystery of a demonstration to be made to the principalities and powers of the air. The church that is willing to make this demonstration is thereby making known the manifold wisdom of God. This is in itself the wisdom of God.

The wisdom of this world is predicated upon self-interest and practicality, that says, "What is the benefit for me if I do this? What is in it for me?" But the wisdom of God is altogether sacrificial. It does not rest on the benefit that one receives, but on the benefit that God receives. There is no benefit for us, but rather the likelihood of embracing redemptive suffering in order that He receives His fulfillment. That is so contrary in every point and particular to the ruling mentality of this world. The wisdom of this world says, "Take care of number one; see to your own self-interest; be concerned for your own security; you have only got this one life."

There is such a power of self-interest, even in spiritual things, that needs to be broken. The principal thing that God gives to break the orbit of self-centeredness is the subject of the eternal purposes of God. We are out of whack and warped until eternity has come into our hearts and into our consideration for His sake. We will be doomed to a spiritual egotism and a viewing of things in a way that only affects us. That power can only be broken by embracing a purpose greater than us, and other than us—namely, the eternal purpose of God. And what do the powers of darkness say? "That is nonsense; you cannot do that; that is irrational and contradictory; nature itself tells you that self-interest and survival are the very principles of life; it is a self-evident truth; you got it in the Declaration of Independence with its pursuit of happiness as being a self-evident truth, and an inalienable right; your happiness, now, in this life; that is what it is about." That is the wisdom of this world, but God is waiting for another wisdom to be demonstrated, and everything in the flesh,

the world and the devil conspires against it.

There is an eternal purpose that has to do with God's own satisfaction. God says that a people who will willingly embrace a purpose unto themselves that has not to do with their own benefit, and make it their first purpose for being, is the wisdom of God. For that was the wisdom demonstrated at the Cross! It was the giving up for another of anything that pertains to one's own life and satisfaction. In other words, the ability to lay down one's life, and not to consider that one's life is dear to oneself, is the wisdom of God. It is a wisdom predicated on weakness and foolishness. One wisdom lives for itself, its own preservation, and its own advantages, while God's wisdom lives for another. It is selfless, and also the wisdom of the Son of God, who never initiated anything in Himself and for Himself, but lived entirely for the gratification of His Father.

The principalities and powers make men respond to their own self-interest. This can be just as prevalent in the ministerial world, where ministers attend Bible School so that they can be credentialized, thereby establishing their ministry. And then they can go from youth leader to associate pastor to one day becoming the senior pastor, and so on. It has the underlying and often unconscious presupposition, "What is in it for me?" As long as we ourselves are affected and ruled by self-interest, we have nothing to say to the principalities and powers of the air. The question, then, is how can we be free from this enormous power of self-interest, which seems to be built right into human nature itself? God broke that power at the Cross.

"Come down and we will believe you," the crowd shouted at Jesus, but He would not. If He had come down, thereby seeking His self-interest and preservation of His life, He would have contradicted the very wisdom of God Himself. Staying on the Cross unto death is an exhibition of another kind of wisdom. Your reason for living is not for yourself, but for another, namely, God and His glory. It takes a power to be released from self-interest, and to live for the glory of God, and that power is in the Cross itself.

The Clash of Two Wisdoms

We need to understand that there are two wisdoms in collision. Even the word 'wisdom' is slightly confusing here, because we think of wisdom in terms of cleverness, and the application of knowledge. A better definition for wisdom would be, "the moral values of God." It is what God is in Himself, and therefore it is what the church must demonstrate in itself exactly who and what God is in Himself. This is what Jesus did in His earthly walk. Everything He did was for the purpose of the Father, without regard to Himself, even though it resulted in His own suffering and death. God is waiting for the corporate church to make exactly the same demonstration in order that the age might conclude. When we begin to take God and His Word seriously, and realize that this must be fulfilled through the church, then we should also realize that God is calling us to more than the casual conglomeration of saints meeting on Sunday. This requires an earnest, daily relationship, and a growing up together.

The moment we, as the church, say "yes" to this, we become marked in the sight of the principalities and powers, and they will test us in it. We will open ourselves to a new kind of opposition, if not persecution. And it may well be that the believers who intuit this, keep themselves safely from the issue, not wanting to stir up the powers of darkness against them. God allows that opposition, however, because it deepens the quality and character of the church that overcomes it. This is the cosmic context of the church in the world.

We can 'speak' about fighting spiritual battles or 'doing' spiritual warfare, but when we do not understand the framework, then even that can be false. Even when we think we are defeating them, they are laughing at us. The demonic statement in Acts, "Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are you?" is a haunting indictment that reverberates to this very day. Someone has said^{3/4}Do not be concerned about how men view you. You will be far better off to know how the powers of darkness view you. If you are seen by them as one to be feared, you are in a much better place than if men were paying you honor. The powers fear anyone who takes the Word of God, the Lordship of God, and His purposes seriously.

We will know how successful we are as the church to the degree that the powers of the air recognize our authenticity. It is preposterous to believe that 'shouting down' and 'taking cities for Christ's sake' are going to effect anything, as if the issue is how loud we can shout or the use of the correct terminology. The issue is the integrity, the quality, and the authenticity of the life together. The powers of the air will be only too glad to allow you to get clever verbally and conceptually. They are only frightened when it becomes real. When they see the authenticity of the crucified life and character, which is to say, the very resurrection Life of God Himself in His

own nature, then they flee in terror. They know whom to regard.

If the church itself lives by the wisdom of the world, then it has no effectual opposition to those powers. They are required to recognize apostolic authenticity only, that is to say, they need to see the reality of heaven and the wisdom of God as being the effectual foundation of God's people. This is a fundamental shift of a whole view of life itself, of reality, and of value. It is no small thing to come into this. We need, therefore, to burrow deeply into this mystery,

... in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now (my emphasis) be made known through the church
...(Ephesians 3:10a)

Paul spoke that two thousand years ago, but that now is still reverberating. That same demonstration to the principalities and powers in heavenly places needs yet to be made. It seems to be altogether unrelated to practical things in the world, and that is what the devil would have you to believe, namely, that the things that are eternal are irrelevant now. Exactly the opposite is true, because to be eternal-minded is to be relevant in time. God does not put them in separate categories. That is the world's game: secular and spiritual; or time and eternity. God wants this dimension to be brought into our present consideration. To embrace the eternal purposes of God in time will change everything now, and make us more significant and relevant now.

The Cosmic Struggle

This cosmic struggle involves mastery for the control and dominion of the whole cosmos. It is a moral struggle by two kinds of moral orders: the righteousness, holiness and humility of God versus another kind of wisdom that is diabolically opposed to it in every point and particular. It is the wisdom of God verses the wisdom of Satan.

There is a competition or a striving, a conflict, between who is going to prevail in creation, and what wisdom, or value system, or way of perceiving reality itself is going to prevail. We know that the whole world lies in the power of the wicked one, who is also the father of lies. We need also to realize the degree to which these powers have been successful in deceiving mankind about truth, about reality, and about the purposes of life itself. They are enslaving mankind over things that are immediate and visibly before them, but completely shutting out any view of the things that pertain to eternity. The whole world is steeped in a fundamental lie, and even the church itself is unaware of this, and subscribes to the lies, and the values of a world system, which, in the Last Days, will become very prominent as an Antichrist system.

The powers of the air are enslaving and tyrannical, wanting to dominate God's creation and all of mankind. The first mandate to Adam was to take dominion over God's creation. God's rule and authority over what He created is very differently expressed than Satan's rule. Satan's is domination, which we can even exercise as husbands over wives, or perform it as ministers in the church. The other is God's dominion, which has a very different character and rule. The former expresses the distinctive genius of the character of Satan, and the latter the character of God. Both are in collision for the triumphant possession, or rule, over this creation, and that is the cosmic struggle.

The World as System

Scofield, the British theologian, defines world as the present world system, a system that is antithetical to God in every point and particular. The word system itself suggests something that man, out of his own wisdom and mentality, has made. Even in the religious world, we are continually tempted to become a system, to systematize something, and to bring it under human arrangement.

The world's system is rooted in power, force, threat, intimidation, ambition and lust. That is what moves the world, and what motivates people to work. That is why they go to college, and anyone who has gone to college knows that it is a whole system by which your life is drained in order to obtain a credential that fits you for a professional employment of a higher compensation. It is a credentializing system, and the principalities and the powers are deeply involved in the entire system. Only someone who has been in it, and whose spiritual eye has

been opened, can see it. The same thing is true in the world of culture, the world of war, the world of government, and the world of religion. Wherever there are systems, wherever men are seeking to promote their interests based on greed, power, ambition, seduction and force, it is precisely there that the powers of the air have their influence, and have taken those men captive. Institutions are not just objective organizations summoned by men to provide human need. They have a life of their own, a purpose of their own, and a reason for being that needs to be perpetuated. If you begin to challenge their assumptions, and the premises by which they have their being, you begin to touch the power that exists invisibly behind them.

Wherever you see an addiction, a craze, or something that sweeps nations, for example, certain lines of children's toys where the child must have it, then you know that there are powers operating. Rock and roll, punk rock culture, music and sport can be added to the list. What has happened with sports is unbelievable. It is no longer just a pleasant pastime, but a powerful, dominating influence for which men will kill their rivals and their opponents, if the game does not go their way or the referee makes a wrong call. Hockey is not hockey unless there is brutal violence on the ice rink.

That system can only be exposed by those who are living completely free of it, who are not living under its influence or threatened by it. They do not need to have their security established, either physically or socially, by obtaining it in the system. To be out of the system is to be a pilgrim, a sojourner and a stranger in the earth. It is a very painful feeling, because we want the security of approval from those who have authority, prestige, influence and power.

The world as system will, in the last analysis, and in order to preserve its interests, resort to violence. On the other hand, the wisdom of God will, in the last analysis, give itself over to being the victim of violence. It will suffer violence against itself, like death at the Cross, rather than preserve itself by acting in violence or in force. We have got to see a whole world as a system enslaving mankind, sending its sons off to wars, killing its children in the womb because of a lust thing that is encouraged through films, etc. The whole system is predicated on pleasure, ambition, satisfaction, and your whole life is spent in keeping your head above water in the system. The system makes sure your time and attention are completely distracted from God, and that you are giving yourself to the gods of this world, even as Christians.

In fact, how would we describe present day Christianity? Is it willing to be radically other than this world? Or does it want to find a place of acceptance and respect in the world and in its system, and yet be Christian also in a Sunday manner of speaking? That is the kind of Christianity we believe will persecute the remnant people of God in the Last Days, because of the 'fanatical' absoluteness of their faith, which sees and is opposed to the world and its systems. These forces are working now. Everything is coming into place for this final and colossal struggle, and it is not so much the world we need to fear as those who will kill us and claim they are doing God a service. There is something about the religious system that is most threatened by people who take the eternal purpose of God seriously³; it crucified Christ, and made martyrs of the apostles. In fact, there is no place where the principalities and powers have a more powerful influence than in religious institutions. Climbing up the ladder of religious success, becoming an elder, all the honors and esteem, give open door to the principalities and powers to come in and to find lodging. It is so ironic that in the very structures of Christian religion, the principalities and powers have such enormous place.

From the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou hast established strength, because of Thine adversaries, to make the enemy and the revengeful cease. (Psalm 8:2)

How does God do this? The 'enemy' celebrates pomp, prestige, fame and the things men admire, and when that comes into our religion, we are finished. Certain men like to wear cellular telephones on their belt. This is not a small thing. We are in a cosmic conflict. It is a step in the wrong direction, because it gives an air of prestige, as right away one knows that he has the finances to afford that, and he must be important or else he would not need it. If I know anything about God, His most significant work will be performed through men whom no one knows. Paul said this about himself, "Unknown, but well known." Unknown to men, but well known to God. The powers of the air also know those who have authority, and who have kept themselves from the spirit of the world. They see that those who wear cellular phones in their belt are exhibiting prestige, or have ambition, and therefore those men are of no consequence whatsoever to those powers. They share the same wisdom as the powers. God has chosen the foolish and the weak thing, and we need to live without the need to possess and to have, to seek prestige and to be recognized. The guileless and the childlike manifest the wisdom that defeats the powers. The Christianity that becomes prestigious, dignified, acceptable and respectable is apostasy.

The Theocratic Context

The underlying, great issue of all is the issue of government, and there is very little comprehension in the church that this is even an issue at all. God is going to establish His theocratic rule (theocracy is the government of God) over creation. If we do not understand that the basic striving and competition is for who will in fact rule over creation, then we do not understand the context in which the whole drama is being played out.

When we come to talk about Israel, we will see that Israel is not just a subject or an issue in itself, but what makes Israel profoundly important is that it is the key to the establishment of the theocratic rule of God. Ruling and reigning is the principal struggle over creation, and Israel is set right in the midst of it. Israel as a nation presently has no consciousness of these things, but the church must be conscious of it, or it will not understand why God has got to be so ruthless in His dealings with that nation. He needs to prepare it for its own place in the rule of God, because the theocratic rule must take place with that nation and in its own land:

For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:3b)

This is not poetry, but literal, and the powers of darkness know it better than the church. We need to be clear as to what God's intention is, because it is over that that the issue of Israel is going to rage. The powers of darkness want to exterminate that nation whose survival and restoration to their God is the key to the ushering in of the theocratic rule of God. Indeed, the issue of the government of God is a foundational principle of the faith. The disciples said to Jesus,

"Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6b)

At least they asked the right question, but they saw it only in a narrow, nationalistic sense, not recognizing the universal significance of that Kingdom. The time for the restoration of that Kingdom was not for that time, but in the future. However, as we shall see, the church is God's instrument in bringing Israel into that restored place that releases the Lord and His coming as King, and the bringing forth of that government.

We need to begin to think in governmental terms. The word 'government' itself has been polluted and corrupted by men. Human government is shot through with selfish ambition, with conniving, with scheming, with self-aggrandizement, with padding one's pockets, with privilege and with opportunity. But for that reason we must not 'throw the baby out with the bath water.' We need to restore the word to its pristine and original meaning. The government of God is more than bureaucracy; it has to do with order, but it has also to do with values, justice, righteousness, equity, peace, mercy, compassion, and love. The world governments know nothing of these things. They are predicated on power, advantage and ambition, but the government of God is life-giving. It is sanity and health for all mankind. We need to understand the church in the context of these things, or else we will think that the church is just a place where our needs are met, and services are conducted. That kind of mentality will not prepare us for anything. It does not move us toward anything, and therefore we do not even understand our own identity as the church in the nations.

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel shall be saved ... (Romans 11:25-26a)

My interpretation of these verses is that when the full number needed to replace the fallen angelic order has been obtained from among all nations, then all Israel will be saved. They will then rule and reign in their place from the very same heavenly places, only this time not contrary to the purposes of God, but for the purposes of God. What a difference that will make. Right now, God is being opposed by the very angelic order that He Himself established, and part of the whole cosmic history of the purpose of the church is to find and prepare a people from among all nations to replace the fallen angels in the heavenly realm. That is why we will need glorified bodies, and why Jesus said to Nathaniel,

"You are impressed because I saw you sitting under the fig tree! I will show you a greater thing, namely, angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (paraphrased)

In other words, messengers or glorified saints will be moving back and forth in concert with God and a restored Israel in the outworking of the millennial Kingdom and its theocratic rule, ministering the wisdom of God over the earth. If we can see that, would we not welcome the preparation now? Would we not have a totally different

view of what our life means if we knew that it was a preparation for that? Would we not recognize that the foundational purpose for our being is the fitting for the eternal purpose of God?

The Final Defeat

Paul was extremely conscious of this whole invisible spirit-realm, and that we signify certain things in our conduct. For example, women keeping their head covered is a statement to those powers of a submission that is important. In fact, we need to be careful not to rail against that whole spirit dimension. The Scriptures read,

But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you" (Jude v 9)

I think one of the dangerous things taking place now in the church is the kind of religious egotism that says, "We can put the devil in his place" and, "All we need to do is shout them down." Be careful. Why are we cautioned not to rail against them? It is a very important principle. Though they are a fallen angelic order, they were in the beginning given governmental position to administrate the purposes of God.

We read in Colossians 2:15 that Christ has disarmed the powers of the air:

When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Jesus unseated and made a public display of them, but the final defeat must come through the church. He disarmed them, but He did not put them out of commission. The powers of darkness still exist and still play a tremendous role in intimidating, threatening and manipulating individuals and nations through fear and insecurity. They say, "If you do not have your place in the system, then what is your security? And how are you going to live? And what if you do not have this insurance? And what if you do not have this or that provision?"

They are disarmed and defeated, which is to say, they have no effectual legal power to continue. They can only victimize the ignorant, the spiritually blind, and those who have not understood that these powers have been disarmed and broken at the Cross. Can you now understand why Paul wanted to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified? Every time the Cross is proclaimed in authenticity and power, their defeat is made more manifest. It is little wonder we hear so little preaching of the Cross. Every true obedience is a reiteration of the Cross. The power of the Cross is revealed wherever there is an obedience unto suffering, and wherever there is a trust in God, rather than a trust in yourself. Wherever the powers of the air see the Cross reiterated, in that place, and in that moment, they are defeated and set back. It is not only the Cross proclaimed, but the Cross demonstrated. Every time the Cross is demonstrated, namely, the suffering of it, the death of it—in that moment, the power of it is released, and the powers of the air are required to flee.

Jesus gave Himself without spot by the eternal Spirit of God. It was the kind of sacrifice that was only made possible, even for Him, by the operation of God's own Spirit, who is the eternal Spirit, and who is the Spirit of sacrifice. Every time that sacrifice is made by that Spirit, it is another demonstration of what was expressed at the Cross, which the principalities and powers of the air cannot abide. It is the demonstration of God Himself. It is what God is in Himself. He is by very nature self-sacrifice, and when He is exhibited, the powers of the air are finished, and when He is exhibited through His own Body, the church, then that is the final defeat.

Every time we defer immediate gratification, it is an act on earth that verifies and substantiates that there is a God in Heaven. How else is our 'peculiar' behavior to be understood? Our essential life and conduct has its determinant by an invisible God. Just that alone is contrary to the wisdom of this world. The wellspring of what explains us, and how we act and do, is entirely to be understood on the basis of a God who is unseen, and our conduct is what demonstrates Him, what He is. Otherwise our conduct has no explanation at all, and especially so when our conduct is contrary to our own self-interest, which is the fundamental principle of the wisdom of this world.

"You shall be witnesses unto Me" is not handing out tracts. It is demonstrating this—that "I am God, though invisible, and the truth of Me is exhibited by your obedience in this earth, particularly when it flies in the face of your self-interest, and will more likely earn for you discomfort or suffering." That is a witness unto Him that the principalities and powers of the air cannot abide.

It is a response that is possible only in those who have determined not to hold their lives as dear to themselves. Who else would care that the eternal purposes of God are fulfilled, except those who love Him—more than their own lives? Are we more jealous that God should receive His satisfaction than we are for our safety, our security and our pleasure? Are we free from intimidation, even the necessity to impress the saints? We need to lose the necessity to perform, which is the heart of utility. Wherever there is intimidation, the powers of darkness are present, because it is their principal weapon. The way in which they still have influence is through intimidation, playing upon fear, insecurity, and the need for acceptance, for fame, for recognition, for prestige and for success—the very values that they themselves promote.

The Power of the Cross

There is a power in the Cross, and a triumph won there that needs to be made manifest in every place through the presence and the proclamation of a believing church, whose very presence is a statement to the principalities and powers that their final vanquishing and defeat is at hand. Where they see this faith, this understanding, this proclamation and the realization of this victory by those who themselves are no longer under fear, manipulation or threat, they are required to recoil, draw back and release their influence over men in that area. We labor in vain if we do not understand this! What is our evangelizing and our Christian programs, but sound and fury signifying nothing, if we have not first wrestled against the principalities and powers of the air, and broken their uninterrupted sway over the very areas where we seek to bring the light of God.

So long as we are a people who are fearful for our security, who tremble over the issue of our own finances, who model ourselves after the world, and use their techniques for obtaining funds, then we constitute no threat to these powers. Something needs to be proclaimed as well as demonstrated in the very life of the church. We need ourselves to live free from the powers, free from fear, from anxiety, from seduction and manipulation. Wherever we calculate things to produce a certain effect and to obtain a certain response, we are guilty of manipulation. As long as we are moving in the very wisdom of the powers themselves, we constitute no witness against them. We need to display that we are not only free from fear for our own security, but joyfully free!

If the chief weapon of the powers of darkness is to intimidate men through fear of death, and the necessity to survive, they are defeated by a church that is not afraid of death, who can say with Paul, “O Death, where is your victory, where is your sting?”

When Pontius Pilate said to Jesus, “Do you not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify you?”³⁴ he thought Jesus would crumble and plead for His life. Yet Jesus did not even blink an eyelash and replied, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given to you from above.” He had an absolute confidence that nothing could terminate His life before the purposes of the Father were fulfilled, and we need to have exactly the same confidence. When the doctors of the law were interrogating Stephen, he did not know that that was going to be his last confrontation. It would eventuate in his death, but when it came, even with its suddenness, there was no pleading. His face shone and radiated like an angel. It seemed such a tragic waste that his life should be cut short, and though the Lord took him abruptly, there was never any sense of misgiving that there was some error being made. He saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father to receive him, because his earthly purposes were finished. We need a whole alteration in our thinking, and to struggle to lengthen or perpetuate our days, but to serve the purposes for which our days are given. When they are concluded, we can look with rejoicing to the fact that we are released from our bodies, that we might be present with the Lord. It is God who is the Sovereign Determiner of those things.

There are some very real issues before us with which we can no longer afford to play. The manifold wisdom of God that is waiting to be demonstrated beyond the earth, and into the very cosmos itself, is reserved for one instrument in God’s eternal purpose³⁴the church. You can understand that the church has to be more than an institution providing religious services. It is a people who live without fear, a people who are already in the realm of the eternal, who are joyfully freed from the power of mammon and who are walking in the light, righteousness and truth. It is liberating to be able to walk through supermarkets and malls without being seduced. You can look at the merchandise, you can touch it, but you can also walk through it, because it does not have a power to captivate your soul. It does not fasten on your time, your energy, and your thoughts, because you have a more powerful value, which is eternal and that touches the glory of God, and frees you, therefore, from the power of this world.

The Meaning of the Cross

We need to have a view of the atonement in the light of a deeper understanding of the Cross, and what was performed there. It is more than the issue of individual or personal sin and forgiveness. The prevailing view of the atonement held today is essentially that the whole work of the Cross was a substitution, or a fulfilling of a satisfaction of God for sin by the sacrifice of Jesus. The atonement is understood only on a personal level to remove the guilt of sin, and that is essentially the whole of it. It has nothing to say about the power of sin, but only of sin as personal, individual failing, and that the atonement is Christ satisfying some requirement of the Father, thereby expiating the guilt of sin.

The work of the atonement, however, was much more than just the expiation for the guilt of individual sin. The principal work of God at the Cross was destroying the works of the Devil, and defeating the power of sin and death. It was a victory over sin itself as power, and over the principalities and powers of the air. That victory is permanent, enduring and eternal, and the church needs to live in the consciousness of that triumph. It was the triumph over Satan, evil and death, much more than the issue of personal sin. Traditional Christianity has an inadequate view of sin, and sees it from a moralistic or even humanistic view as a kind of failing, rather than a power that resides in the human nature, as well as in the principalities and the powers of the air.

If this is a time of restoration, then one of the things which needs to be restored is the significance of the Cross, and what was actually performed there. It makes a profound difference how we view what took place there. If we see sin as only an individual, moralistic failure, a mistake that can be paid for by the sacrifice of Jesus to remove the guilt of it, and then tomorrow you perform it again, then we have totally misunderstood the atonement.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. I do not know to what degree we realize that our whole Christianity is very individualistic, very personal: "My salvation, my going to heaven," rather than the great issues of defeating the powers of the air that are competing in a cosmic rivalry with God over His own creation. And that it requires the corporate church in its full authority as an instrument to complete that victory at the end. To think of Jesus' work as a triumph brings a very different view with regard to our place in the purposes of God. But if we are thinking only personally and individually, then heaven for us is a place where you go and enjoy an eternal vacation. If we are thinking of the triumph of God, then the heavenlies are a place that we will come to occupy in a governmental capacity to rule and reign with Him in the establishment of His Theocratic Kingdom.

The view that sin is only a personal failing is trivializing sin. It is not a recognition of the radical power of evil that required the very sacrifice of God in His Son to defeat it at the Cross. I wish I could go on to explain what an inadequate view of sin means in terms of opening the door for the ravages of evil. For example, the Jewish rejection of the Cross, and its meaning, and the disposition to push it away from our consciousness, and to look upon the crucifixion of Jesus as only a kind of momentary, historical accident of no great significance, means that Judaism and world Jewry have lost the one and great opportunity given by God to recognize the nature of evil. In other words, the revelation of evil comes by seeing what it cost God to meet it and defeat it. The enormity and magnitude of what was wrought at the Cross in God being crucified is the most powerful provision given of God to glimpse the magnitude of the evil of sin itself as power.

The humanistic interpretation of the atonement has its ground in the failure to see the radical hostility of God to evil, and His judgment upon sin. It does not recognize sin for the evil that it is, but concerns itself essentially with guilt, and that guilt can be relieved by the propitiation that Jesus provided in satisfying the need of the Father for a just retribution. It makes God the Father look like a heavy-handed Old Testament deity who demands a certain kind of justice to make the thing right, and Jesus was that necessary 'sacrifice.' This interpretation does not see that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, but rather that Jesus the man, the perfect man, and the ideal man, was the satisfaction that requited God the Father's need for justice. It appeased Him as the God of vengeance and judgment. Well, if that is your view of God, then there is going to be every temptation to be drawn to something that is much more sentimental and consoling.

Jesus allowed Himself to suffer the full brunt of the powers of evil and death, and was raised from it by the power of the Father. There was a triumph over death, and over evil, by the wisdom of God in the humility, meekness, long-suffering and patience of the Lord. That is the true meaning of the Cross. It is much more than

a God of vengeance being satisfied that an atonement was made, which is a very limited and inadequate view, and will negatively affect our entire view of God Himself. There are purposes in the atonement that go far beyond the benefit that comes to us as individuals. It is not that we are absolved of individual responsibility for sin, but that we need to see that our sins are related to the power of sin. It was the defeat of the power of sin itself at the Cross, and therefore we no longer need to live in it, or yield our members to it. It is not just the release from guilt, but a new life being imparted, and a new principle of life that comes with the resurrection from that death.

The Provision of God in Community

We cannot come to freedom from that influence by ourselves. There are so many hooks in us. We need the prayer, the support, and the encouragement of those we are joined with. We need the encouragement of people with a like mind and heart to be a people who demonstrate the wisdom of God. I cannot see that we can be this people except 'in community.' The separation from the world is so painful, and those powers are so pervasive and powerful. Only through the aid, the encouragement, the prayer, the wisdom, the counsel of others, and the atmosphere that we generate together as the community of God's people, can we live like that and maintain that freedom without again being sucked back into the power of the world.

Community living or an intensity of fellowship is God's provision to resist and overcome the powers of the air. Sons and daughters of God are those who will overcome the world, the flesh and the Devil, and the enormous power that is increasing through the influence of these things. We are urged to exhort one another daily while it is yet today. Tomorrow is too late, let alone next Sunday. If we are not in daily attendance to one another in an atmosphere of encouragement and correction, reproof, prayer, counsel, then we will find ourselves being drawn away. The leaven of sin finds its way in, and we can be drawn back into the world.

In the intensity of life together, and in that interrelationship, we can more easily recognize the issues of whether Mickey Mouse or Power Rangers are dangerous things that carry a certain spirit from which we need to separate ourselves. It is more than just merchandise that is being presented as harmless, and even attractive and desirable for our children. After all, the last ones whom we want to deny are our children! How do we act in this terrible tension of not wanting to deprive them from something they cannot see as evil, yet we recognize it? The issue of the Cross becomes an issue right under our roofs in the kinds of acts that we are required to perform. But how do we even recognize something that seems to be innocent, and yet carries a spirit of darkness like these images I have described? How do we discern the things that are evil when they are depicted, and set before us, as being something not only innocent, but beneficial, pleasant and good to have and to enjoy? It is going to take an uncommon ability to see through the appearance of something, and to recognize the inherent evil that is in it, and the strength of character to resist it, to keep it from your household.

I think our ability to discern the things of the earth and the Devil is our proximity to heaven. The more we are citizens of heaven, the more we will be sensitive to see the contradiction of the things that are of the world and of the earth. What will be the first accusation thrown at any believer who wants to move toward a heavenly-mindedness, and looks with great suspicion on the things that are of the world and of the earth? "Intolerant, dogmatic, legalistic!" The issue of discernment is not some kind of magical ability, but relative to the authentic spirituality of an entire Body. We will either be dull, or acute, based on the quality of our corporate life, integrity and truth.

This is calling for a church that is a people together, whose corporate intercession makes the principalities and powers of the air 'part' over the place where they are. It is inevitable that such a church will be resisted, and that the powers themselves will test it, and resort even to oppression and persecution. The fact that the church at large has not been opposed up to now, is not a statement to our spirituality or maturity, but a scandal, and the evidence that we are not yet the church we ought to be!

The true church has always been oppressed and persecuted by the powers. It is their final act of desperation against us, even as they were desperate against Jesus. They rubbed their hands in glee when they had Him totally in their power, but He went to His death as a lamb in silence, not resisting them, but yielding Himself to that terrible power of darkness. It was by that ability to yield that Jesus triumphed over them. It was a final showdown, a conflict between two wisdoms, two moral orders: violent force and power in vicious brutality against a Lamb, slain from before the foundation of the world, who did not so much as open His mouth, but suffered rather in meekness and humility.

The worst that could be brought against Him revealed the best that was in Him. Utter malignancy met utter magnanimity. Satan was made an open and public display. He was ridiculed and despoiled by the very submitting of Jesus to the worst fury and vengeance, animosity and violence that the powers know. Yet the Lord did not react in kind, He did not shriek out, He did not plead for his life—but prayed for them. Hell in all of its fury met Heaven in all of its humility, meekness and long-suffering—and Heaven triumphed. That triumph is complete, but the world does not know it because the church has not demonstrated it. Jesus bruised the head of the Serpent, but it is left to the church to ‘finish him off’ by making an eternal demonstration of the manifold wisdom of God, not just in this age, but in the ages to come.

In the early church, no-one thought that the thing they had was their own. We are talking about Jews here, which is not an insignificant detail. It is a profound statement of the depth of the sanctifying work of God that had broken men loose from their deep selfishness. They were brought to a configuration and quality of relationship that required a new Greek word, ‘Koinonea.’ There was no word known for it in the Hebrew lexicon. They had come to a place of relationship that was the particular distinctive of the church. It was a quality of life of which the world knew nothing. In a word, they were a demonstration on the earth of what God’s mode of relationship is in heaven, and the particular character by which He relates with Himself in His tripartite composition as the Godhead. It is a relationship of an unusual, self-giving quality by which the one exalts the other, and defers to the other. The genius of the Godhead Himself had come to earth, and was now being demonstrated by Jews, famous for their selfishness, for their holding to themselves, and for their contention. We need to recognize the genius of what the church was at the first. For the first expression is the pure, pristine and heavenly intention of God. A church that comes together merely for services as a conglomerate of individualities, each one going his own way, is no threat to the powers of darkness at all. They are only required to recognize an authenticity that is a reflection of what is in the Godhead Himself.

This subject has practical applications that will affect our daily character and posture in the world. If we see this, and if we consciously walk in the light of it, we will become acute in our spiritual discernment, and we shall begin to sense the play of these powers in the civilizations in which we occupy. We will begin to recognize their influence through institutions of education, culture and religion. There is something that God is waiting for in an entire church. It is an authority to be expressed, a quality of praise that truly ascends up, a depth of intercession that is corporate, and which will require those powers of the air to break and part, recoil, draw back and release.

The Power of True Praise

There is no deception more profound than that for which Charismatics and Pentecostals are most subject. We think, albeit unconsciously, that the euphoric thing we enjoy by our music and choruses is really the statement of our faith. We may enjoy it, and we hope that God is being blessed also, but we need to be ruthlessly honest and gird ourselves with truth; and we need first of all to be truthful about our own condition. The true statement of our faith and the condition of our lives are what we experience in fear or apprehension about death, and about insecurity, when we stand in a tremulous place where an authority is confronting us that expresses the rule of the principalities and powers. The issue is not whether our worship pleases us or facilitates the service, but whether it is in fact worship. True worship is the statement and expression of the redemptive work of God that has been experienced in our lives authentically and corporately.

Loudness is power, and it is manipulative when the sound amplifiers are turned up. It is predicated on the notion that the powers of the air will be defeated through militant or revved up ‘worship.’ The moment we begin