

**General Topics :: Apostolic Conversion: Pretext or Reality? Katz****Apostolic Conversion: Pretext or Reality? Katz - posted by MaryJane, on: 2009/11/12 13:10**

Greetings

This teaching was shared with me through email and I really found it to be a blessing. One that I want to share with others as well. If you have not read this or heard it before and have time it is very good.

God Bless

maryjane

Apostolic Conversion: Pretext or Reality?
Katz

I've come to a realization that there really must be a radical crossing to the other side. I can't think of a greater cruelty or delusion than to speak about apostolic* things when we are spiritually unable to walk them out (please see the footnote). The apostolic things that relate to God's glory can only be found in a people who are utterly abandoned to God. If we embrace only the vocabulary of this kind of life, we involve ourselves in the cruelest of all deceptions. Let's talk about anything else, and use any other kind of language, but let's not embrace this language unless we intend to fulfill it. Somehow we need to pause and raise the question of the authenticity of our own conversion. Do you understand what it means to be born again of the Spirit, to be converted in the sense of an utterness toward God that a life of apostolic reality requires?

It is remarkable to note that in the book of Acts there are three expressions of Paul's conversion. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to suggest that the apostolic life that followed was in proportion with the kind of beginning that it had. Or to put it in another way, maybe we can't go beyond the depth of our beginning. Some of us may need a day of new beginnings or a beginning that has never, in fact, been made. If that is the case and that beginning or new beginning does not take place, we could be left crippled at a level of usefulness and relationship far beneath the level the Lord Himself intensely intends and desires for us.

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem, and as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And he said, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus who thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." And he trembling and astonished said, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" And the Lord said unto him, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul rose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Behold, I am here, Lord." And the Lord said unto him, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth. And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight." Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem. And here he hath authority from the chief priest to bind all that call on thy name." But the Lord said unto him, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

The Importance of Apostolic Conversion

The beginning of the apostolic life greatly determines its end. Many of us are not walking in fullness because of inadequate beginnings. I could write at length about the inadequacy of our contemporary gospel, how it is more like a formula for salvation than an induction into the most holy faith. The pagans in Thessalonica who heard an apostolic proclamation of that gospel were saved "from their idols to serve the living God, and to wait for His son who comes from heaven and

who will save them in the day of His wrath.” (1 Thess. 1:9). Evidently, they heard a much fuller and more powerful presentation of the gospel than most of us. Therefore, right from the instant of their conversion, there was a quality of things that made that church distinctive (see 1 Thess 1:3-10). Indeed, they reflected their beginning and we reflect ours.

But praise God that if our beginnings have been faulty and inadequate, if our poverty of beginning is hindering our walk—God can give us a new beginning.

I see in this a kind of parallel with Israel and the great ‘crossing over’ that they were required to make with Joshua. There is a Jordan, which means, literally, ‘a descent into death.’ And this crossing leaves behind those who have stumpled about in the religious wasteland for forty years. Here, many cadavers were left behind—the bodies of those who did not have the fullness of heart of a Caleb or Joshua (Caleb means ‘Whole-hearted’). Only two out of an entire generation had the privilege of being welcomed into the land of promise and participating in the taking of that land. We stand at this kind of crossroad today. It is time to cross over.

But do you know that forty years later, when it came time to cross over, not all of the house of Israel crossed? The tribes of Gad, Manassah and Reuben chose to remain on the other side. They remained because the ground there was lush and the grasses were high. They were cattle breeders who recognized something of immediate value. They were unwilling to risk believing in what might be found on the other side. They pleaded with Moses and got what they wanted. They were allowed to remain on the wrong side of the Jordan and were lost to the whole history of Israel. The only reminder we have of the tribe of Gad, who chose the wrong side, is the Gadarenes of the New Testament time. They raised pigs and were unwilling for a Deliverer to come because it proved expensive for their flesh. They much preferred to sustain their herds, rather than to welcome Him who, casting those same herds into the sea, delivers from demon spirits!

What a commentary on the consequences of an unwillingness to cross over, of ‘hanging out’ on the wrong side. I think the reason is always the same—because it is conducive to the ‘flesh’, because back there we have an assurance of things that pertain to ‘herds’ (i.e., our immediate self-interest).

So there is now, as then, a real necessity for ‘crossing over,’ lest our own carcasses be found on the wrong side. Or, we may deteriorate into the depressing things that became true for the tribes of Gad and Manasseh. They refused to go over but remained for their ‘cattle’s sake!’ We saw what the land of the Gadarenes had become by the time of Jesus. Today, they are lost to any kind of historical remembrance, let alone value.
In Position for Apostolic Conversion

Consequently, the conversion of Paul, and our conversion, is critical. It begins with the phrase, ‘as he journeyed...’ I think there is more hope for an enemy of God journeying in full sincerity (even in his error) than there is for those who profess to be friends of God and have long since ceased journeying and, instead, are just kind of ‘treading water’ or occupying some kind of safe place. There is more hope to convert an enemy who is in motion, however grievous his error, than there is to help those of us who are safely sheltered in correct beliefs and doctrines but are not moving at all!

‘But as he journeyed...’ I wonder if there would have been a conversion if Saul had been content to rest on what he had done and be satisfied with the traditional categories of orthodoxy that satisfied most of his contemporaries. ‘But as he journeyed, suddenly there came a light from heaven,’ and I’m wondering if journeying is a condition of that light for us as well? Is it that when the Lord sees a pursuing that there is more hope of our being arrested by the light of God than if we are merely treading water, satisfied with the spiritual status quo of our lives? But until that light shines, until something comes down upon us from above, we remain in the place where we are. Everything is from the great, sovereign hand of God, Whose eye ‘roves to and fro over the face of the earth, seeking that one whose heart is perfect toward Him.’

Obstacles to Apostolic Conversion

I love the way the Lord encountered Saul, who fell to the earth and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?’ I think that as we examine the anatomy of conversion we see what it is in us that must be radically turned. It is this fatal error, which, if allowed final expression, will ultimately result in the persecution of God and the Church. And what is this error? It is this—putting our ‘you’ before God’s ‘Me.’ ‘Why do you persecute Me?’ ‘Why do you celebrate, and put your self-interest, however religious and sanctified you think it is, before Me?’ We are not converted until His ‘Me’ is before our ‘you.’ That is the fatal mishap, that is the error of our whole way—and the tragedy is, we can go an entire lifetime with our ‘you’ preceding His ‘Me,’ even religiously. Something needs to be wrenched about, radically altered and corrected! The one thing must be before the other—His ‘Me’ before our ‘you.’ If that does not take place, be assured that in one form or the other, we are persecuting God. We are opposing

God even while we claim to be laboring and serving in his interest ! Isn't that exactly the picture of Saul? Note that here was not some calculated atheist, indifferent to God. Here was a man zealous for God. The error that led to the persecution of God's own people, and God Himself in His people, was committed by a religious man whose own ideas (however well meaning) of what God wanted and needed were yet before God's.

How does it stand with you now? If that basic and fatal error is possible for a man of religious zeal (who, with every right intention, sought to serve God and seek out opportunities to round up heretics and bring them back to Jerusalem), how much more are we capable of exactly that same fatal error? That, I think, is essentially characteristic of the Church today. Even in our best form it is somehow still ourselves, it is still, "How are we affected?" That stubborn, spiritually self-centered attitude, however unconscious and expressed, can only be dislodged by profound conversion. For this, in fact, is what conversion is.

How many of us, in the hearing of the Word of God, have taken that word in through the eyes of our own seeing and fitted it into the existing structure of our lives? Our categories? Finding a way in which the Word would be agreeable to our view of ourselves, of our spirituality, of our call? In a word, what we are doing, even unconsciously, is elevating ourselves above the Word and ourselves determining how it can fit comfortably into the categories of which we approve. Instead of allowing the Word to devastate and demolish our categories, we stand or sit above it as arbiters or judges, carefully molding it so it can be neatly taken in. It can even be acknowledged as true and celebrated as the "Word of God." We applaud the speaker for having brought it, thinking we have done God's service by listening and approving!

Can you see why we need to be converted?

This self-centeredness is unspeakably deep, and ironically, deepest in the religious and spiritual realm. What greater insult to God, what greater expression of putting ourselves before Him than the way in which we even hear and conditionally receive the Word? It is entirely an unconscious process, and we have been doing it for years. And by so doing, we have been missing the value and intent of the God Who gave it!

In effect, we set ourselves above His Word, determining to what degree we allow it credence and acceptance. We determine to what degree we intend practically to make that word a part of who we are and act upon it.

Do you realize that this is almost continually going on?

Ours is a holy God. He is pouring His heart out to us and there we are, consciously or unconsciously, calculating to what degree we are going to realistically receive such a word with the intent of doing it!!

I think that in this one thing I have described the essential infirmity of the Church—why it is so stale, why it is not going from faith to faith and from glory to glory, why its services are full of "sermons" rather than the Word of God (which by its very nature demands response and change—that is the purpose for which the Word is given). We are not hearing with the intent of doing. We are hearing with the intent of approving the Word as biblical and enjoying it.

Risks of Apostolic Conversion

If we will not be changed by the Word, by what else shall we be changed? Are we receiving it in an open and naked way and letting it have its full work? Are we willing to say, "Lord, let it be unto me according to Your word?" "I don't know what the consequences will be—it may mean the elimination of my home and lifestyle, of my whole mode of being. It may mean the loss of that for which I have labored so long (even that which is not wrong in and of itself)." But until we come to the place where, when we hear the Word, our heart says continually, "Let it be unto me," we do not hear the Word as God's. It cannot perform the work of God. It becomes merely a "sermon" that we approve or dismiss.

What did it take for Mary to say, "Let it be done to me according to Your word?" It meant nothing less than receiving a pregnancy that could not be explained. And, that to a pious, self-righteous generation totally prepared to stone to death on the doorstep of her father's house that woman who had a pregnancy like hers. To this day, the Talmud (the writing of the rabbis) makes shaded allusion to Mary's pregnancy as having come from a Roman soldier. How else shall unexplainable pregnancies be understood? And when Mary said, "Let it be unto me according to Thy word," she meant, "I am willing to bear the full consequence of receiving this word, even if it shall mean my death in disgrace even though I am, in fact, a virgin of Israel."

I'll tell you, when God will find a heart like that, there is no limitation on the divine work that can then begin. When I think of the potential for the works of God in the people of God in these last days, I sense the frustration of God. He cannot

to even perform His work until a people will first receive his Word in a disposition of spirit willing for its full consequence—whatever that consequence might be! “Let it be unto me according to Your Word.”

You’ll save yourself much unnecessary wondering about the specific cost of that word for you if you have reconciled within yourself that it will inevitably lead to the place of death. And once you’ve realized that, what difference does it make by what form it comes? Stoning at the doorstep of your father’s house, disgrace, rejection of men, hostility, misunderstanding, catcalls or shrieks or reproach—these kinds of things as well as moral and physical hazards of all kinds? God is yet waiting, and has never had any other beginning for His works than one who will say, “Let it be done to me according to Your word!”

Offering Ourselves

Let us note Saul’s answer when he was confronted by the Jesus who said, “Saul you celebrated and elevated your ideas and agenda before Me?” From it came that one great statement that underlies the whole of the anointed life that followed. “Lord, what would You have me to do?” I want to say that every invoking of the word “Lord” without (in reality) also following it with the rest of Paul’s statement, is playing with a holy thing! Even taking the name of the Lord in vain!

I want to ask you, dear ones: When was the moment that you transacted with God something of the utterness with which Paul began his apostolic walk? That question Paul asked consumes and includes every and all other questions. “Lord, what would You have for me to do?” No if’s, and’s or but’s. No stipulations, no conditions, no guarantees. No requests (even for illumination, understanding, or explanations). If the Lord is Lord, we have but one posture only—to be down on the earth before Him, with this one cry ringing throughout the remainder of our natural lives, “Lord, what would You have for me to do?” We may say it once, but we live forever in the reverberation of that question or we do not live an apostolic life at all.

How many apostolic lives are currently held back? How many unbelievably fruitful, continent-changing lives are waiting for the one question that God yet waits to hear—a word that has never been sounded in his hearing? Sounded with every stop removed and with all qualifications cast aside? It is the statement of utter, apostolic abandon. And until the Lord hears it, he is not going to tell you what you have to do.

That there are things to do is beyond question. But they can only be performed in the power given to those to whom they can be entrusted. “The Spirit is given without measure” to the sons who have no purpose in themselves and no life for themselves. They live by one question only! “Lord, what would You have for me to do?” Anything less is robbery. Anything less is conditional and inadequate. Anything less is slavery to fears and doubts and hesitations and all those things that cripple and compromise us. There is freedom only when we have come finally to that place where, with full integrity, we put before God that thing for which He waits. It is that which He cannot command or compel. It must be utterly and freely and totally given. And, no matter what words we recite, He’s not Lord until it has been given.

“Lord, what would You have for me to do?” I think that the answer is eternally the same, though the form of the fulfillment of it may vary—“I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” No wonder we don’t ask the question!

How well we realize what the necessary answer must be. But I’ll tell you, dear saints, in case you don’t know it: for every suffering that comes as the consequence of obedience to the Lord there is a glory unspeakable and reward eternal. There is joy in the midst of the suffering, pain and distress. There is joy even in the midst of the misunderstanding of men and the reproach that follows obedience to a God who would have us do.

We need to ask ourselves, has there ever been a point, in the whole of our Christian life, where each of us has asked God, “Lord, what would you have for me to do?”—with full intention, not of just obeying the answer to a specific situation, but of living continually in the light of that question from then on.

THERE WILL BE NO APOSTOLIC CHURCH UNTIL THAT QUESTION IS BOTH ASKED, AND CONSISTENTLY SUBMITTED TO.

“Well, you don’t understand, I’m a professional, I’m a doctor, I’m not some off-the-wall “Jesus freak” like Saul. He didn’t have much to lose. You have to realize that I have family and professional responsibilities.”

Saul was the prized student of the Rabbi Gamaliel, and if there is any man who committed religious suicide by raising th

at question, it was Saul. He forfeited an entire career that would have won him a celebration to this day in Jewish orthodoxy. He forfeited all of that (even counting it as dung) by raising the only question that any creature can raise before its Creator, "What would You have for me to do?" Whatever the consequence, whatever the loss, You are Lord. And if You are not the Lord of that question, then anything I would presume to speak in Your name is a mockery and a farce and a mere religious exercise that even at best falls short of the glory of God!

The irony is, and mark my words, if you continue in such an exercise... in the last days you will find yourself, not among the persecuted, but among the persecutors! Centrifugal forces continue to work, ever bringing us into the one orbit or the other— into that which is apostolic or that which is finally apostate! "For the love of many shall grow cold," and the last days shall be marked by the great apostasy. The falling away of many who could not bring themselves to follow the Lord wherever/however He would lead them, but who found themselves in a whirlwind of a kind less than that which is apostolic. They will find themselves, instead, offended by those who are apostolic and ironically opposing and persecuting them! This is the end of those whose "you" is still before His "Me".

Apostolic Seeing

Must we not ask, with Saul, "Who are You, Lord?" and receive the answer, "I am Jesus, whom you persecute."

Do we really know Him until we do?

"Who are You, Lord?" Even the revelation of Jesus as Lord so much waits on our pulling out the stops. He is not going to squander and give us such treasure of the revelation of the knowledge of Himself in truth until He sees a people of truth willing to serve Him in truth. If we really recognized it, we would see our inadequate vision of Jesus crippling our spiritual life. We cannot rise above that inadequate vision which we have self-applied to our own lives for our own purposes. We need to ask, really and truly, "Lord, Who are You?"

I have myself been guilty of mouthing that word carelessly in a superficial way. Who hasn't? But I have to acknowledge—I really don't know Him as I ought to know Him! "Who are You?" The answer is, "I AM. I AM THAT I AM THAT I AM. I will be who I will be. I am Jesus. I'm not your 'buddy boy' and I am not the one to help you along the way and patch up your marriage, (though I do all those things). I am above your need. I AM JESUS." Unless that revelation comes, and comes when our faces are upon the ground, what kind of apostolic service can we perform? For it cannot exceed, but has to reflect whatever our knowledge of God really really is. Is not that why we ourselves are, often, victims of inadequate ministries? Is not that why we have been invited to "accept the Lord" and repeat a prayer? Praise God for the measure to which He honors that, but look now how useless our lives have been: banging around, divorced and remarried, doing the kinds of things that reflect not having a true beginning from the first. We never knew Him as we ought, and yet we are "singing His praises," or at least think we are! And the powers of darkness enjoy the continuation of just this kind of thing. It causes them no worry at all! There is nothing here that alarms them. Go ahead, continue your round of services. Continue your programs. It in no way jeopardizes the kingdom of darkness, because you cannot rise above your inadequate knowledge of God. Even the use of His name is a kind of "jargon," a formula, a shallowness that does not mean much.

Only that one who is deeply converted, who has gone down on his face and must be raised up from it as blind (who can see no man and must be led away as a child) is the one with the potential to threaten the kingdom of darkness! And how many of us want to be led away like that by the hand? Here was Saul, the prized student of the rabbi Gamaliel. He could quote yards of Scripture with rabbinical interpretation. Here he was lying utterly blind and utterly devastated by the word that came to him in the voice that called him by name. And when he arose, he could not see because of that light and had to be led away. And he saw no man. And I don't think he ever again saw men in the way we see them—evoking in us fear and intimidation and compromise. The fear of man is so powerful, so enslaving in our lives because we have never gone down and been brought up in blindness by that light. The light that never again permits us to see man, even ourselves in our own humanity.

Now I want to tell you of one of the cruelest ways we can be deceived—it is our concern to be understood and be perceived in the way that we would like men to see us spiritually. And until we are blind to men, even to the "spiritual man" that we think ourselves to be (or who we desire to be known as) we cannot serve God in an apostolic way. We must join Paul in such a selflessness, such a mindlessness about this last man, this last cruel deceiver. We must leave behind the need to be understood by men the way we would wish ourselves to be seen and approved! We need to come to a place where we see no man, even our own man, even our own seeing!

That is why Paul could say, "Follow me as I follow Christ," without a bit of arrogance. Is it not we who think that he is

arrogant because we project upon him the ego in which we still live? Because we have not fallen on our faces upon the ground upon which he has fallen and been blinded by the light of God which blinded him? You project upon him your own idea of "man" and assume that he must mean by that some kind of self-centered statement because you cannot understand a man who sees no man. You cannot understand a man in which the element of self is not a factor. He does not have to be recognized. He can be despised. He can be cast out. He can be the offscouring of the world, without so much as blinking at it! For he sees no man. (see 1 Thess. 2, etc.)

The light can blind us to that crippling seeing, even that seeing of ourselves that makes us spiritually self-conscious and therefore compromised.

Apostolic Conversion Can't Be Mimicked

"And he, trembling in astonishment asked, 'Lord, what would You have for me to do?'" It must be said "with astonishment and trembling." You can't say it offhandedly and expect to be changed. You'll know it is authentic when you die a thousand deaths in making it. Beware of anything that is casual and easy, however correct. It is such a cruel delusion to find ourselves in a lie about the very thing that is correct. It is with an utterness of astonishment and trembling that we need to say, "Lord, what would You have for me to do?"

And you can know that if you will say that today, God will hear you and take you at your word. Your life will be changed. Things will be released that have been held back, waiting for that pronouncement that must come from you. But that pronouncement may rightly come only if it is true and not just a religious response. It must be made with astonishment and with trembling. This is the point of "crossing."

Many of us have said, "Lord, what would you have for me to do?" but only in a particular moment of distress and need. But who of us has asked it foundationally in a once and for all way, in utter abandonment of something never again to be taken back? Once you say this, the words are irretrievable. Something has been registered and recorded in the annals of heaven and has been heard in the hearing of witnesses and before the principalities and powers of the air. It is once and for all! It requires an utterness that nothing in this world has prepared us to perform.

This is the world of relativism. This is the world of "easy come, easy go." This is the world of "maybe," "I guess," and "I suppose." This is the world that shuns and despises the absoluteness of God, and therefore cannot meet Him on the ground of utter abandon. To meet Him on this ground, with that absoluteness, with all the stops pulled out, is once and for all to be brought out of that "maybe" world of compromise into the "absoluteness" of the kingdom of heaven!

TO LIVE A WHOLE LIFE CONTINUALLY REITERATING THAT QUESTION IS CONVERSION.

Are YOU converted, in that sense of the word. Really?

Walking in Apostolic Reality

The moment God, Who has waited so long, hears your response, He will answer, "Arise and go, and it will be told you what you must do." But before it is told you, before there is an explanation, before there is any assurance—arise and go. That rising is in the strength and the power of the resurrection life itself! That coming up from that death into which you have gone, like one struck dead from that light, is not you pulling yourself together, it is the force of the life of the Lord Himself. For the rising and the going is a call to things beyond anything you are capable in yourself to do. It is entirely a resurrection requirement! That is what makes apostolic doing a glory, and that is why Paul himself, the Chief of the apostles, was the one who most frequently punctuated his prayers with the cry, "Lord, who is sufficient for these things?" I know that many who read this are very sufficient human beings, very skilled, very capable, very well-ordered lives, who could make a very impressive show of things. But God is calling you, dear saints, to a dimension of service beyond any capacity in yourself to perform, and says, "Arise and go." And when He says, "Arise," it is not just an invitation, but an impartation of life, waiting for that one who has forfeited any hope of any possibility of serving God on the basis of his own ability, of anything in himself.

I've seen grown men tremble and weep when they heard this astonishing word. They were sailing along marvelously, serving God with skill and ability when they heard a word like this that cut like a sword through their hearts and brought them down as dead men. They would say, "But, I have been encouraged in the Church to perform on the basis of my Ph.D. and my expertise, and I have been called to serve and to do things on that level, and have until now succeeded marvelously."

But now something has come clear beyond any capacity in the individual. There is no rising, no walking away except in the power of that indestructible life that raised Jesus from the dead. That power will also raise those of us who are willing to be struck dead. We who are willing to be brought down and entirely blinded to the things we thought ourselves able to do, blinded to the things we celebrated as correct.

How classic this conversion is. Its every element so formed in heaven, its wisdom so eternal. This "great" Saul was so reduced by the light that had fallen from heaven that he was taken as a child by the hand in total helplessness and dependency, lying as one dead. Blind for three days and nights, neither eating or drinking, he reviewed his entire understanding of God. All of the principles of the faith, all of his "New Testament" understanding—the Lord put totally to death. For if he was to be God's gift to the Church, it had to be only with an understanding that is conferred by God and is received by the laying on of the hands by the simplest of the saints, Ananias. God had to teach this apostle, the Chief apostle to the Church, in very practical terms, the genius and the mystery of the Body of Christ from the very beginning of his whole apostolic walk. This is a lesson that many of us have never yet understood and have not yet seen (though we use words that make it seem as though we do)!

However much we mouth the particulars of the 'Body of Christ,' (as if a new fad with a new vocabulary with which we can play and express ourselves), if it has come to us by research and study and not from God Himself, it has not come to us. Maybe that is why we are in our current condition. It is only "terminology," and awaits a receiving of something utterly humiliating that can only come to us through the operation of the lowly Body, or it will not come at all.

This "Arise and go" that will come for some of us in this hour, need not mean that any factor of our life is in any way outwardly changed. You will, likely, still go to work tomorrow, you will still come home to your same house. In fact, nothing of your circumstances will in any way be externally altered, and yet, at the same time, profoundly, everything will be altered. This "arise and go" sets in motion the whole heavenly dynamic by which in one day that to which we will return may not always be there.

So it is not for you to try to figure out what you need to do once you have made this response. The arising and going, having been set by God, will have its own working out. "It will be told you what you must do." Like Abraham, you will hear, "Get thee out into the land that I will show you." There is always a future part of it that requires a trembling and clinging to the God who will show us what is required the next day, even the next moment. That is not the way we have been taught by our society to live. We want to know. We want to have assurance. We want to have a firm grasp on what we are doing, why we are doing it and what will be the result of it. But God says, "I will show you what you must do." There is a necessary holding on to what is given moment by moment by moment by the God who has called us, and calls us into an utterness of dependency upon Him that violates every strength and confidence in which the world would have us to be established. It is a pilgrim way, and you'll never get used to it.

Yesterday's success is not enough for today. Now, the consequences are even greater. Life and death are at stake, eternity is in the balance, and who is sufficient for this? Once you arise and go, it will be told you. But you need to live with the tension of it, just as Abraham and every true saint who has ever responded to such a call. Because there are things you must do. Things that no one else can, that no one else is intended to do. It is specific. It is appointed. There is a must that is for you.

"It shall be told to you," God says, "when you'll tell Me that you are willing to put all your self beneath Me once and for all." Now your purpose and calling can be revealed. Now it can be released. And it will not be what you thought it would be, but what the Lord has intended it to be and will now show you. It is here where God makes clear the eternally significant purpose for our existence.

The Evidence of Apostolic Reality

Do you know what the measure of having come to apostolic reality is? It is that we are able even to persuade our own children of the truth and seriousness of who we are. These children have the uncommon ability to sense just how real their parents are together with other adults. They are asking themselves, "How much does this also require of me, though I am young? Is it just something for the adults, because they like that kind of thing?"

We will know that we have arrived at apostolic reality corporately, when we will have persuaded our own children! And the fact that we haven't, as yet, has had a toll beyond anything we can imagine. Our present satisfaction and willingness to abide in something less than the sacrificial intention of God has come about because we have hung out on and loved the wrong side because its grasses, which feed our flesh, are flourishing. This has cost the kingdom of God more than can be imagined in just about every home.

Until we come to this, are not our best religious efforts a 'persecuting of the saints,' by means of lulling them into a lesser place? Jesus said to Saul, "In that you have persecuted the Church, you have persecuted Me." Are we not guilty of persecuting the Church if we are giving to it something less than that which is heavenly? Is it not depriving the saints to allow (and even encourage) them to substitute doctrinal correctness and the verbalizing of truth for truth itself? Is it not dreaming that we ourselves are there, while all the while we have not yet entered the land of promise, let alone taken its cities? Are we still not on the wilderness side? Have we not persecuted the Church, short-changed it and exaggerated our acts with all "the right words?" By this, have we not condemned those around us to deteriorating on the wrong side without even being aware of their condition?

So Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man. He never again saw men or feared men, but found that key to apostolic boldness and uncompromising audacity that regards God Himself only. From this time onward, everything is for the Lord's sake and not for one's own. You find that in Paul's writings. You never hear an y reference to, "For my sake." There is no "my." It is their sake and the Lord's sake. And what kind of Church would we have today if men of this kind were our leaders? Until we have such men, we are suffering a kind of hardship that is equal to persecution, and those who have been its leaders need to recognize this and fall before the Lord.

So then, the one who persecuted the Body, failing to recognize its Head, receives sight, receives apostolic seeing, through the laying on of hands by its simplest member. From the very first, the Chief apostle was instructed about his dependency upon the Body and what the genius of that organism is—that alone is glory to God. And unless we ourselves lie blind, "neither eating or drinking for three days," (i.e., putting aside even our traditional categories) we shall not see. But, we will be left to use the terminology of the Body of Christ while living independent of it; even praising it, thinking that we are doing God's service.

"And immediately he arose and there fell from his eyes as it had been scales."

"And straight away he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." And straight away, he opened himself to the opposition and persecution of men who have a particularly violent hatred for that which is apostolically authentic. They cannot live with its challenging reality!

"Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he's not fit to live! And they cried out and cast off their clothes and threw dust into the air." What is there about a converted man that makes the powers of darkness so fume and rage that men are beside themselves with a fury and cannot abide that "such a man" live?

What a man—a heavenly man! What a servant to the Church, for the Church's sake and for the Lord's sake! It is this kind of selflessness that labors day and night and speaks the whole counsel of God without fear that it will be understood, accepted, rejected or cause offense. Such a man does not anticipate the consequence for himself, because he lives in the echo of one great statement, continually, "Lord, what would You have me to do?"

Let's bow before Paul's God at this hour, who is the I AM and JESUS still. Conversion is to the uttermost, or it is not conversion. It is an utterness toward God by the Spirit, that the world cannot abide and will forever oppose, even unto death. But the works that such a man will do are eternal in their consequence.

So, in the name of Jesus, I call upon you to respond with fear and trembling and astonishment to the God whose light has shone round about you. Bring down to the earth every lesser thing, however correct, however applauded by men, however much it delights your own soul. Let Him raise you up for the works that you must do when you arise and go in the power of the life given you once you have gone down into the death of everything less. Let Him hear from you in that place one statement only, "Lord, what would You have for me to do?"

Art Katz

* The "Apostolic" as described throughout this writing is the Apostolic life: the life of Christ Jesus, revealed by and in the apostles and those they were in relationship with. That Apostolic life is the inheritance of ALL the children of God, as described throughout the gospels and letters (Luke 7:28; John 7:38, 13:35, 14:12; Acts 3:6, 13:7-12, 19:15; Galatians 4:6-7, 5:16; Ephesians 1:4, 2:6, 3:20-21; Colossians 1:26-27; Hebrews 2:10; James 5:17; 2Peter 1:3-4, 3:12a; et.al.). It would probably be good to take the time to read these passages before moving on!

Re: Apostolic Conversion: Pretext or Reality? Katz - posted by Leo_Grace, on: 2009/11/12 13:24

Wonderful and powerful teaching by Art Katz! A humbling and inspiring message of uncompromising truth. Thank you for posting this, Maryjane. :-)