

Midnight Cry Messenger

FREELY SHARED WITH THOSE WHO ARE HUNGRY FOR TRUTH — NOT TO BE SOLD

Volume LX: Number 3

A Quarterly Publication Of Midnight Cry Ministries, Southern Pines, NC

JULY-AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2015

FIRST LOVE

by Phil Enlow

From a message preached in October 2014

Good morning. The other day my mind was drawn to the book of Revelation, and truthfully I don't spend a lot of time there. A lot of people think they've got it all figured out. I haven't run into anybody yet that I'm convinced has it figured out. But there are still a lot of profitable things in there.

And I began at the first part of the book, but you don't go very far before you run into the letters to seven churches that were part of Asia Minor. Apparently there were seven congregations in seven cities within that province. And, then as I thought back about what I had read, my mind was drawn to the first one.

And, I'm confident that what I have been thinking about with respect to the letter to the church at Ephesus was for me, but I don't think I'm the only one. I think it's part of a message of what the Lord is wanting to give to His people about the very nature of His Kingdom and about things that are issues that are relevant in our individual lives, in our corporate life, in the world as a whole. And so, I'm just gonna go ahead and begin by reading this letter.

You know, John had been serving the Lord faithfully, and — every apostle except John wound up being killed for their faith. And the only reason John wasn't killed for his faith was it didn't work when they tried. They literally did something to him...I forget whether it was boiling oil, or fire, or whatever it was, it was supposed to kill him. I mean, that was what they intended and it didn't work. The Lord had a reason for preserving him at that particular time.

And so, instead what they did to get rid of him was to send him to a rather desolate island called Patmos. And that's where he was when he wrote the book of Revelation when the Lord gave him all of these amazing visions.

And so, it begins with him on the Lord's Day, and all of a sudden he hears this voice behind him that sounds like a trumpet, just an amazing sound. And he turns around and he sees this incredible vision of Jesus, only He's not the Jesus that he remembers. There are certain...undoubtedly there are symbolic elements to what he was seeing. But, he saw this incredible bright, brilliant figure with a voice like many waters. And, he did what any self-respecting person would have done. He fainted!

And the Lord brought him to and said, don't be afraid. I want you to tell the churches what I'm showing you. So, this is where it began. And it says

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Persevering Prayer

by Andrew Murray

And the Lord said, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint..."

There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8)

Of all the mysteries of the prayer world the need of persevering prayer is one of the greatest. That

the Lord, who is so loving and longing to bless, should have to be asked, time after time, sometimes year after year, before the answer comes, we cannot easily understand. It is also one of the greatest practical difficulties in the exercise of believing prayer. When, after persevering pleading, our prayer remains unanswered, it is often easiest for our lazy flesh, and it has all the appearance of pious submission, to think that we must now cease praying, because God may have His secret reason for withholding His answer to our request. It is by faith alone that the difficulty is overcome. When once faith has taken its stand on God's word and the Name of Jesus, and has yielded itself to the leading of the Spirit to seek God's will and honor alone in its prayer, it need not be discouraged by delay. It knows from Scripture that the power of believing

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PERIODICAL
Postage Paid

Midnight Cry Messenger
P.O. Box 685
Southern Pines, NC 28388-0685

Midnight Cry Messenger (USPS 347-880) is published by Bible Tabernacle of US Hwy 22, North of Southern Pines, NC 28387. Periodicals Postage paid at Southern Pines NC. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Midnight Cry Messenger*, PO Box 685, Southern Pines NC 28388-0685.

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This paper is published quarterly. USPS-347880. It is sent out free to all that request it. Its purpose is to present truth and to alert God's people to the lateness of the hour.

Editor's Letter

Dear Saints,

Greetings to all in the wonderful name of Jesus! Despite all we see that is wrong in the world He is still on the throne. Man makes great boasts but Christ's will is the one that will prevail. Hallelujah!

The main article in this issue, "First Love," is from a message preached almost a year ago, yet the Lord's emphasis continues to focus on our inner lives and the need for a genuine living relationship.

Remember what the Lord told Samuel the prophet when he went to the house of Jesse to anoint a king to replace Saul. Samuel was impressed with the appearance of Jesse's older son but the Lord said, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

How easy is it for us equate serving God with what we believe in our heads and the religious activities we faithfully carry out and to miss what is most important to Him: a heart relationship in which we are transformed from the inside out. The Ephesian church of Revelation had it all — except what mattered most!

I hope many of you, at least in the US, were able to see the new movie, "War Room." What a powerful and uncompromising portrayal of real spiritual warfare! I hope you will all see it, at least when it comes out later on DVD. The Lord is reaching out to awaken His own.

In light of the movie it is surely appropriate to include a wonderful article by Andrew Murray on prayer. Truly, what powers the kingdom of God is not education, talent, zeal, organization, doing the "right things," etc., but prayer that is energized from heaven itself.

Don't forget to pray for our November meeting which is coming up soon. This year we will be here in Southern Pines. Plan to join us as the Lord enables.

Till next time may God's rich blessings be yours.

Your brother in Christ,
Phil Enlow

First Love

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in chapter 2 of Revelation, "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.

"I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

"But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." (NIV).

So that's quite a letter, isn't it? And, the church at Ephesus was one of the main churches in that region of the world. It was in a port city. It was a large city. It was a Greek culture. They were devoted, the city itself, to the worship of a goddess who was variously called Diana or Artemis. And the central point of all the worship of that city was a very lustful, heathen religion.

And, I think it's in chapter 18, just to give a very quick summary, of Acts. You find Paul traveling and he went to Corinth, and he ministered there for a while. But then he met up with a couple called Aquila and Priscilla. And what drew them together was that Paul was a tentmaker and so was Aquila.

And it's obvious that from their relationship that Aquila and Priscilla became stalwarts in the young church and very faithful to the Word, and they understood it. Paul taught there for a couple of years, and had a fruitful ministry and the church of Corinth was born. And then we find him traveling to Ephesus and there's where Aquila and Priscilla settle, and Paul goes on.

And there's a short period of time where there was a Jew named Apollos. He had been born in North Africa. But he was a very zealous, gifted man, a good speaker, and he was very zealous to tell people about Jesus and the baptism of John. He just didn't have the whole picture. He had never really understood where the Gospel was going, where this message of Jesus coming into the world, and what He did was about, and the fact that people were meant to enter into a relationship with God Almighty where He literally comes to live on the

inside and impart new life.

And so Aquila and Priscilla take him aside and explain more perfectly what the Gospel is about. And it's very quickly evident that he becomes a valued servant of God, traveling around, later associated with Paul. Some believe he's the author of Hebrews. He would be a good candidate for that.

But in any case, then Paul comes back to Ephesus. He had stopped there briefly and the Jews wanted him to stay at that time. And he said, no I'll come back if it's God's will. Well, he came back and he finds these disciples that...he senses something missing and he finds out that all they ever knew was the baptism of John, which was just repent and be baptized and get ready because Christ is coming.

And so, he introduces them to the real Gospel, and they are baptized, they are filled with the Spirit, and then Paul begins a ministry that's over a period of two or three years of just really establishing a church. The Gospel went out with great power. There were miracles upon miracles that God performed through him as a testimony to that heathen culture. And, he ministered to the Jews for a while until they kicked him out and said, "We don't want to hear this anymore." And then he went next door and for about a period of two years he taught every day, and the disciples would gather.

And so, they had quite a foundation in that church, didn't they? And, you get the picture later, as Paul is determined to go to Jerusalem—he feels like the Lord wants him to go to Jerusalem for a testimony and also to carry an offering for saints there who were really having a hard time because of persecution. And so, he passes through the port city of Miletus.

But anyway, he sends word — he doesn't want to spend time because he's in a hurry, but he wants to talk to the elders. And he calls them in and he says, I'm never gonna see you again, but you remember how I didn't hold anything back. I told you the whole deal. I gave you everything that God gave me. I didn't hold anything back.

And he encouraged them and warned them. He said, the time is gonna come and there's gonna be people try to come in among you. Watch it, watch yourselves and watch the flock that God has put you over. And so, he encourages them and then he goes on.

And somewhere within this narrative, you find Paul continuing to be concerned for the church there. And of course, the book of Ephesians was written to them and what rich truth is there!

And, a lot of people don't really connect it, but the book of 1st Timothy was really directly connected with the church at Ephesus because Paul had sent Timothy there to establish them and to

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teach them and to help them and encourage them in the faith. And you see the things that he's teaching Timothy have everything to do with Timothy: watch out, there's people with false doctrines. You need to help them in this area. Here's what it means to be an elder. You need to help them really establish elders.

So this may well have happened before this visit that I mentioned where Paul passed through. And, they even had, apparently, some lady there who felt like she was a prophetess and was trying to usurp authority over the men. And it wasn't just that she had this gift, it was that, hey, I'm God's messenger, you've got to listen to me. It was a sense of control that she was trying to establish. And he dealt with that question in Timothy.

All these issues are practical things where you're taking people out of a heathen culture and trying to teach them what the Kingdom of God is like and how to be the Body of Christ. But you can see reflected in this letter that there was a strong foundation. Not only do you see Paul and Timothy, but John the Apostle, himself, from witness outside of scripture, was very likely a resident of Ephesus. So think of the apostolic foundation that they had.

And you know, as I was thinking about this letter, it just is amazing to me: if you and I were going to try to categorize what we thought a really good church would be, I think, by our measure.... I mean, they were strong on doctrine. They didn't tolerate sin. Nobody could come in and just live a sinful lifestyle, and it be accepted as okay. They were strong in all these areas.

And if we had been going down our checklist, we would have said, "hard work," check, "perseverance," man that's a great one. They don't give up. They run into hardship, they just keep on going, check. I know that you don't tolerate wicked men. Oh wow, that's great! You listened to what Paul said, you are protecting the flock, and you tested those who have claimed to be apostles.

You know, that was what he was concerned with, with Timothy. All these crazy doctrines, Satan had attacked them in a lot of different ways, just like he's done through the centuries. He had all these approaches. I'm gonna create hardship. I'm gonna send people in there and see if you will really stand up for righteousness. I'm gonna send people in here who claim to be sent from God, but they're gonna have doctrines that are gonna kind of deviate from the path. That didn't work either. Boy, "check!" This is a great church!

And it goes down and says, you, "...have found them false. You have persevered...." He uses that

word again! "And have endured hardships for my name...." So, again, you see the sense of the Devil: I can't get them this way, I can't get them that way, so I'm gonna persecute them. I'm gonna really make life rough for these people. Well, that didn't work either, did it? They've endured them and they, "...have not grown weary."

So there are some really strong qualities in these people. We would've said, wow! You just go right down the list. This is an awesome church.

But listen to what follows. "Yet I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love." Now, if you and I had been grading this church, we would've said, "A, A, A, A." Okay, well, down here, we've got to work on this one a little bit. You know, we've got to get this "love thing" straightened out a bit. But you're a great church! Wow!

But that isn't what Jesus said, was it? It's an amazing revelation when you realize what God values versus what we value. It's not that these other things were bad. They were wonderful. The Lord commended them for them. That wasn't the issue. But what had happened was they had forsaken their first love! There was something that supplanted, not "what" they were doing, but the spirit in which they were doing it. They were doing the right things, but the heart was not the same as it had been.

You know, I can just imagine what the church would probably have been like when Paul first went there. I mean, it would have been composed of people who were ignorant of a lot of things. They had a heathen background. There would have been a lot wrong. The Lord could not have probably said all of these things that He had said, or half of them, at that time.

But yet there was something they did have that apparently God values a lot more than all of these things put together. There was a reality, there was a relationship with God that had generated something in their heart and their spirit that was real! It was not about stuff and doing things and "doing it right." It was about a personal, intimate relationship with God that was founded upon love!

And it's not just the enthusiasm. You know, when I was thinking about this, I was thinking, oh boy, we've got to maintain this white-hot feeling. I don't believe that was what it was. But there was something that motivated them to do what they did. It was living! It was real! It was the forgiveness of sins! The fact that God could reach out in love and what He did on the cross, and it was just real! And it energized what they did! It colored all their relationships one with another and with God. It gave them an impetus to go out and share the Gospel. There was a passion about it. That's what the heart of the whole thing was!

And God said, "You've lost that! You're doing the

right stuff, but what's behind it is not the same." And it wasn't just a drift. He didn't just say, Satan's kind of drifted you off. He said, you have forsaken. You know, I thought about that. Forsaking is a choice.

And what the Lord is getting at is that somewhere along the line — it may not have been some cataclysmic moment where you said, I'm gonna do my thing and I'm gonna keep on pretending. I'm gonna keep on doing the right stuff, but I'm gonna do my thing, and that's the priority, that's gonna become the priority of my life. I don't believe that happened. I believe that this church was probably shocked to get this message. What do you think?

Yeah, they would've been shocked! Look at what we're doing! We have really got it. We have listened to your servants and look at all the stuff we're doing and we don't give up! We're just marching right along. But somewhere along the line, something had happened in individual lives, and somehow it percolated through the assembly, where little choices came along where it becomes "what I want." I'm gonna do what I want in this area. But it's okay, because I'm still doing all the "stuff."

It's getting quiet in here. Maybe I'm not the only one. Little choices, and one leads to another and leads to another and leads to another, and first thing you know, you've got people who are smiling, and they're in the assembly, and they're doing all the right stuff, but yet the priority of life has shifted. Because you get down to the bottom, and Jesus didn't say, hey, we need a little bit of tweaking here, we need a course correction. He said, repent. Do you know what repent means?

It meant that church, in spite of all the things that looked good, was going exactly the wrong direction. That is a road that has been traveled throughout the centuries by one religious movement after another, one church after another, one life after another.

And it is just something that we have to contend with as we live in these bodies. But living in these bodies, we have to reckon on the fact that we've got a nature that's gonna find a way to have its way, and yet, you've got habit, you've got belief, you've got things that are kind of ingrained. You've got a sense that, hey, I'd better stay okay with God, now. Let's be careful how far we go here. Let's — well, it's compromise — it's a spirit of compromise.

But it's so subtle that we walk right into it and don't even realize it's happening. Boy it doesn't take long, does it? And you see, throughout the scriptures you see examples of what happens when people go down this road. You look at the Israelites. Man, it was just perpetual, constant. There was just this constant pull of "what I want" and "what I think," and next thing you know what they were

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doing was just going through the motions. It was a form.

And after a while, they got tired of that and said, the heck with this. We're just gonna do what we want to do. But it just started with that little turn of the heart towards my will, what I want, am I pleasing myself, or am I serving God?

I'll tell you, God doesn't just come in and wham, the first time. There's a heart that's reaching out. I mean, does He value the things that He commends them for? Of course He does. But what good is it if the heart's not there, or if it's drifting, or if it's just that you've broken your life up into the sacred and the secular? We carve out a place for us and then the rest of the time, okay I'm gonna do the right stuff, so, I'm okay. Oh Lord, help us, help me.

You know Ron read a scripture from Isaiah chapter 66 last week. I believe that was you that read that. And it was talking about what the Lord was really looking for. And this was written, as so often was the case, in a time of great apostasy when people were, evidently there were at least some that were still 'doing' the right things.

They were offering the sacrifices and the prophet enumerates four different things that they were doing and he compares them to things that they would have found utterly disgusting! You know, cutting off a dog's neck, or...I forget what the specifics were, but they were terrible things! They were heathen things in some cases. He was saying, you're doing all this stuff I told you to do, but when I see it, this is what I see! It doesn't make a bit of difference. You might as well be sacrificing a hog for all the good it's doing! Oh, I want to have, not just the outward, I want to have what goes behind it.

And you think about Amos and all that the Lord was telling them. There was one place where he talked about the songs that they were singing. Man, they probably had a great choir. I mean, David was the one that established the idea of having singers and that being a regular ministry. Well, apparently they were still doing that! They probably had a great choir, great arrangements, I don't know.

But when the Lord listened, He didn't hear beautiful music, He heard noise! He said, take it away! I'm sick of it! I don't want to hear it anymore because there's nothing behind it! It's just a form! It's just you going through the motions of all this stuff you're trying.... You say you're serving me. And it's just worthless. In my ears, it's noise, take it away!

Come on, get with the program! Let your heart be right. Let justice run down like waters. I'm looking for the heart. I'm looking for what's real. I'm looking for relationship.

When you think about some of the things that we "do" in our spiritual lives, praying, reading the Bible, spending time with the Lord, coming to a service, do you ever have almost a feeling of resentment? Almost a feeling like this is a duty, I'd almost just as soon not? Do you ever have to fight that off? What happens if that begins to have a little bit of an impact?

See, that was going on in these people's lives. They kept bringing the sacrifices, but on the inside they were grumbling about it. They were saying, what in the world, what am I doing? Look at so-and-so, they're getting along great. They're not serving God. What am I serving God for? What am I getting out of it?

But do you see what the spirit behind that is? It's about me and what I want in this world. And as soon as the heart begins to move in that direction, it's me, it's what I want. I'm gonna do something that pleases me. I'm gonna serve me and if God is good with that and if He blesses me in some way, well, that's okay, too. But basically, what I'm really about is me. And it just kind of forms and it begins to be a direction.

And these people, actually, some of them, were to the point where if they were going to bring a sacrifice they'd say, okay, I'll bring the sacrifice, but you know I've got that little runt of a lamb over there. I was gonna get rid of him anyway, so let's just bring him. We'll kill two birds with one stone. I mean, I'll have a sacrifice and I'll get rid of something I didn't want anyway. And the Lord is looking at their hearts and watching what they're doing. He's listening and He's aware.

You notice how the letters to the Ephesians, this particular one in Revelation, begins. I hold the stars in My hand. Now they were the angels, they were the messengers who were watching over the church. But He says, I walk among the candlesticks. Over and over again, He says, I know, I know, I know, I know.

I'll tell you, we sometimes get to living our lives and we get lost in what we see and what we feel, what we experience, and we forget how close the Lord is, how real He is, that He is among His people, that He knows the deepest secrets of every heart. He knows our motivations. He sees all of it! He's intimately aware of everything about every single one of us. Isn't it amazing that He loves us, in spite of what He sees?

If there's anybody here that's got any honesty at all, you know that down deep there are things that aren't pretty that the Lord wants to work on. But He loves us. Thank God! That is really the bottom line in this thing: God's love. It's not His condemnation.

But God continues to reach out and He's even reaching out through Malachi! Over and over again,

there's this sense of God reaching out. If you just do what I say, if you'll do it from your heart, if you will do it because you love me, there's so much blessing I long for you to have. I want you to know the fellowship that I long to have with you, and they wouldn't do it.

But in the midst of that, you go down...I've often pointed some of these things out in chapter 3. And, let's pick it up in verse 13, because now He's still talking about the people. "You have said harsh things against me, says the Lord. Yet you ask, What have we said against you?" (NIV).

When you get on this road where it's about me, that's one of the points about it. It's very self-deceiving. Because it allows us to feel like we're okay when we're really just going dead opposite to the way God wants us to go. And they didn't even know! God had to tell them.

He said, "You have said, It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty? But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape."

Do you see what was really going on in their hearts? I don't know how much of this was verbalized, but it was in here. They were still doing it, but there was an inward resentment. There was an inward resistance. There was an inward turn of the heart in another direction that was beginning to eat away at the — it was like a dam that would look good on the top, but underneath was being eaten away. And all it takes is the right thing and it just all washes away.

But listen to what the Lord says. "Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard." The same Lord, who walks among His people, hears this too. He says, "A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name. They will be mine, says the Lord Almighty, in the day when I make up my treasured possession." And so on, the glorious promise to those people who are not just doing the right stuff, but they've got it in their heart. This is what my life is about.

You certainly see it in what Jesus says about the scribes and the Pharisees. I mean, there's the ultimate case of people who have just cobbled themselves a religion together that made them feel superior, made them feel like they were right with God, but the heart was completely wrong! He says, you've done all these things, you are so scrupulous about your little regulations, but you've, "omitted the weightier matters of the law," (Matt. 23:23, KJV) justice and righteousness and all those things that are part of My character.

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You think about what God's nature is. What is His nature? You can say a lot of things about Him, but if you're going to break His nature down or sum it up in one word, what would it be?

Love! Love is a relation word. Now I'll tell you, God is not satisfied with form in anyone's life. I thank God for the degree of what God's done here! But I'll tell you, there's a warning to my spirit! This is real! The issues that are here are real! God is not satisfied, I don't care how great our doctrines are, I don't care how great our songs are, I don't care how great our services are. I praise God for His presence to the degree that it's here. But none of these things matter if that first love is gone!

I said, it just starts sometimes with little things. A heart begins to lust after something that is part of this world. And so, we begin to carve out a little space for self. This is mine. This is the Lord's. Look at all I'm doing for You, Lord. Surely, I'm entitled.

It's getting quiet again. But is that not the way the human heart goes? Is there anyone here that's not affected by that kind of pull? Lord, have mercy. That's what the Lord was seeking, to bring them back. How many of us just begin to carve out a little space, indulge ourselves, when the Lord wants to be the center of every part of our life?

Of course, the devil is there to whisper and say, oh man, your life will be a drag. You won't get to do anything you enjoy. Oh, what a lie. There is no end to the love. We are created in the image of God. If there's one thing that is meaningful, that enriches any human life, it's love. That's the hunger of every human being! To matter, to have somebody care and be concerned, and to be the object of somebody's affection! We were made that way!

But what about God, Himself? What does He think about a relationship when it's just about stuff, and doing, and doing the right thing? Oh, what technicians we are, sometimes. God help us.

You know, you see the principle in marriage, for example. I mean, the heart of marriage is not what you do. What is done is meant to be an expression of something. And it's meant to be an expression of the love in the relationship, and the respect and all of those things. It's a very personal thing! It's, fundamentally, about relationship!

Out of that relationship now, you have a man who will be a man and who will go out and work and support and protect and all those things. And you'll have a nurturing mother. This is God's pattern. I mean, I realize it's all screwed up in our society! But, this is what God looks for in a home, and that's the godly relationship that is founded.

But if you take the love out of that, if it just

becomes mechanical, if it becomes, I'm doing the right thing, I'm doing all the stuff I'm supposed to do, but yet, each person is basically kind of going their own way, doing their own thing, and they are like separate ships passing in the night. They stay in the same home, but there's no real affection at the heart of it. Is that satisfying? Is that right? Is that what it's meant to be?

But you see the heart of God is reaching out to His people saying, you've got your little lives there. You're kind of going your own way. I long to get you back to where you are excited about spending time with me. There wasn't anything in your life that you weren't ready to share and bring me into the joy of what you're doing. I'm not against you.

You know, a lot of the things that are pleasurable to us are not sinful. I mean, He gives us good things to enjoy. We get together and have a meal and rejoice and fellowship in the Lord. Praise God! Somebody cooks a real nice dish and everybody enjoys it, do you think the Lord's against that? Of course not. And the people are there and they're loving one another, they're expressing His nature and His life and they're enjoying the time together! Man, God just loves that!

You don't have to push Him into a corner and say, You hang out there for a while, we're gonna do our thing, and then we're gonna come and get You when we need You. But an awful lot of people begin to go down that road. You know, is there anything in our lives that we don't want the Lord involved in? We just kind of leave Him on the side and go do that, and then we'll come back, and we'll kind of get right and we'll just — oh my. God, help us.

This was what was going on in that wonderful church that we would have given, at worst, an "A-minus" to. Man, this is an awesome church! Everybody ought to be like this church! And God says, you are on a road that if you don't turn around, you're gonna be gone. God's values are different from ours.

You think about somebody like Enoch. What was God's testimony? Did he do great things in the world? Not so far as we know. But he did one thing that brought him a place of honor in the Word of God. He walked with God. There wasn't any part of his life that God was shut out from.

He didn't have — well, he didn't have computers — but he didn't turn on his computer and say, now Lord, now You go over there. I'm gonna look at some stuff now. I know that probably you won't like this so You just go over there so You won't be bothered.

Lord, help us, to let the Lord be the center of everything in our lives. I'll tell you, there'll be joy. There'll be peace. There'll be meaning. There'll

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Prevailing Prayer

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prayer is simply irresistible; real faith can never be disappointed. It knows that just as water, to exercise the irresistible power it can have, must be gathered up and accumulated until the stream can come down in full force, so there must often be a heaping up of prayer until God sees that the measure is full, when the answer comes. It knows that just as the peasant farmer has to take his ten thousand steps to sow his tens of thousands seeds, each one a part of the preparation for the final harvest, so there is a need for often repeated persevering prayer, all working out some desired blessing. It knows for certain that not a single believing prayer can fail of its effect in heaven, but has its influence, and is treasured up to work out an answer in due time to him who perseveres to the end. It knows that it has to do, not with human thoughts or possibilities, but with the word of the living God. And so, even as Abraham through so many years "who against hope believed in hope" (Romans 4:18), and then "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Hebrews 6:12)

To enable us, when the answer to our prayer does not come at once, to combine quiet patience and joyful confidence in our persevering prayer, we must especially try to understand the words in which our Lord sets forth the character and conduct, not of the unjust judge, but of our God and Father, toward those whom He allows to cry day and night to Him: "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." (Luke 18:8)

He will avenge them quickly, the Master says. The blessing is all prepared; He is not only willing, but most anxious, to give them what they ask; everlasting love burns with the longing desire to reveal itself fully to its beloved and to satisfy their needs. God will not delay one moment longer than is absolutely necessary; He will do all in His power to expedite and rush the answer.

But why, if this is true and His power is infinite, does it often take so long for the answer to prayer to come? And why must God's own elect so often, in the middle of suffering and conflict, cry day and night? He is waiting patiently while He listens to them. "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." (James 5:7) The farmer does, indeed, long for his harvest, but knows that it must have its full amount of sunshine and rain, and he has long patience. A child so often wants to pick the half-ripe fruit; the farmer knows how to wait until the proper time. Man, in his spiritual nature too, is under the law of

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Prevailing Prayer

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gradual growth that reigns in all created life. It is only in the path of development that he can reach his divine destiny. And it is the Father, in whose hand are the times and seasons, who knows the moment when the soul or the Church is ripened to that fullness of faith in which it can really take and keep the blessing. Like a father who longs to have his only child home from school, and yet waits patiently until the time of training is completed, so it is with God and His children: He is the patient One, and answers quickly.

The insight into this truth leads the believer to cultivate the corresponding dispositions: patience and faith, waiting and anticipating, are the secret of his perseverance. By faith in the promise of God, we know that we have the petitions we have asked of Him. Faith takes and holds the answer in the promise as an unseen spiritual possession, rejoices in it, and praises for it. But there is a difference between the faith that thus holds the word and knows that it has the answer and the clearer, fuller, riper faith that obtains the promise as a present experience. It is in persevering, not unbelieving, but confident and praising prayer, that the soul grows up into that full union with its Lord in which it can enter upon the possession of the blessing in Him. There may be in these around us, there may be in that great system of being of which we are part, there may be in God's government, things that have to be put right through our prayer before the answer can fully come: the faith that has, according to the command, believed that it has received, can allow God to take His time; it knows it has prevailed and must prevail. In quiet, persistent, and determined perseverance it continues in prayer and thanksgiving until the blessing comes. And so we see combined what at first sight appears contradictory—the faith that rejoices in the answer of the unseen God as a present possession and the patience that cries day and night until it be revealed. The quickness of God's patience is met by the triumphant but patient faith of His waiting child.

Our great danger, in this school of the answer delayed, is the temptation to think that, after all, it may not be God's will to give us what we ask. If our prayer be according to God's word, and under the leading of the Spirit, let us not give way to these fears. Let us learn to give God time. God needs time with us. If only we give Him time, that is, time in the daily fellowship with Himself, for Him to exercise the full influence of His presence on us, and time, day by day, in the course of our being kept waiting, for faith to prove its reality and to fill our whole being, He Himself will lead us from

faith to vision; we shall see the glory of God. Let no delay shake our faith. Of faith it holds good: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Each believing prayer brings a step nearer the final victory. Each believing prayer helps to ripen the fruit and bring us nearer to it; it fills up the measure of prayer and faith known to God alone; it conquers the hindrances in the unseen world; it hastens the end. Child of God, give the Father time. He is patiently listening to you. He wants the blessing to be rich, and full, and sure; give Him time, while you cry day and night. Only remember the word: "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." (Luke 18:8)

The blessing of such persevering prayer is unspeakable. There is nothing so heart-searching as the prayer of faith. It teaches you to discover and confess, and to give up everything that hinders the coming of the blessing, everything there may not be in accordance with the Father's will. It leads to closer fellowship with Him who alone can teach us to pray, to a more entire surrender to draw near under no covering but that of the blood and the Spirit. It calls for a closer and more simple abiding in Christ alone. Christian, give God time. He will perfect that which concerns you.

Let it be thus whether you pray for yourself or for others. All labor, bodily or mental, needs time and effort: we must give up ourselves up to it. Nature discovers her secrets and yields her treasures only to diligent and thoughtful labor. However little we can understand it, in the spiritual farming it is the same: the seed we sow in the soil of heaven, the efforts we put forth, and the influence we seek to exert in the world above, need our whole being: we must give ourselves to prayer. But let us hold firm the great confidence that in due season we will reap if we don't give up.

And let us especially learn the lesson as we pray for Christ's Church. She is, indeed, like the poor widow, in the absence of her Lord, apparently at the mercy of her adversary, helpless to obtain restitution. Let us, when we pray for His Church or any portion of it, under the power of the world, asking Him to visit her with the mighty workings of His Spirit and to prepare her for His coming — let us pray in the assured faith: prayer does help, praying always and not stopping will bring the answer. Only give God time. And then keep crying out day and night. "And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?" (Luke 18:6-7)

First Love

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be — His presence will.... You think about what's going on. If you've got somebody who is doing all this right stuff, religiously speaking, they're doing everything they're supposed to be doing, but yet God says you've left your first love. What does that mean?

God, who is love — it means you're doing a lot of stuff that I'm not even in, because, if I were in it, my Spirit, which is love, would be filling it! What you do would be an expression of your love for Me, and your love therefore, for everyone else, and your love, and your concern, and your passion for the lost. There would be a passion about what you're doing! And again, it's not working up an emotion. Many times these are choices in dry times.

It certainly was in Malachi. They didn't have any fire flying or feelings to go on. But they knew to be faithful. They knew it was ultimately about a relationship between you and the Lord. And that's true of us as an assembly, but it is certainly true in our individual lives. What is at the heart of our spiritual lives? Is it about you getting to know Him?

You know, Paul summarizes what he was about and the focus of his life was about. He talked about having to press through. But what was the fundamental thing? It was, "I want to know Him!" Then he enumerates some of the aspects of what that meant! "...The power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death," and all that! But the first thing was, I want to know Him!

It's not knowing "about" Him! It's not "doing it right." Oh, how easily do we fall into that trap of doing it right and thinking that we're okay because we're still coming to church! We're still putting money in the box. Every once in a while we open the Bible, and we breathe a prayer when we're in trouble. Oh my.

What is your life about? What are our lives about? Are they about knowing Him and saying, Lord, I love You. It's not just a mechanical thing. It's, Lord, I want to know You. I want to experience You.

Don't you see the heart of God in this? This is not a condemnation. This is a heart that yearns. This is a heart that says, I want to fill your life with all of My goodness and all of My love and all of the joy that I have! There was a joy in the heart of Jesus because of what he was accomplishing for us! He says, I want you to know that!

You have no idea what you're missing when you try to go it alone, and do your own thing, and please yourself, and that becomes the way that you go.

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~ Pray For Us! ~

Website: www.midnightcry.org

First Love

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You're cutting yourself off from My heart and I want to be real to you. I want to take you through things that are sometimes very difficult, very challenging to your faith. But I want to be real to you in those! I want you to experience My faithfulness, so that our connection would just grow. There would be such a relationship that no devil in hell can break it.

You can strip away all the stuff that people do, all the distinct things of different groups and all of that. It comes down to one thing, it's a love relationship between Christ and His people. It's Him, it's the Father in Him, and Him in us, and us connected to one another. And the flowing of His Spirit is His love. You take that away, all you have left is religion. Take that away from an individual life, all you have is a life that is devoted to self in some form or other.

So you wonder why the Lord's word to Ephesus was seemingly so severe. I mean, you know, it's like, "Jesus, get a clue! Look at all the good stuff that we are doing! Yeah, we have a little need in this area, but it's not all that serious!" But it was, wasn't it? Because they had kept the outward, but the inward was being rotted away and disappearing.

And I just pray that God will make this real to my heart. Part of thinking about this was, Lord, what do we do? But He does say to repent, doesn't He? Repent is a choice! It's a choice to turn around. It isn't like jumping from Egypt to Canaan, but it is a choice to say, wait a minute, my life is not about me. Lord, help me to let You into every area of my life, and seek You, and desire You, and reach out for fellowship and learn to draw close.

Let me just start where I'm at! If I'm in a deep, dark place and the relationship has gone cold, help me just to start. Help me to have a hunger to reach out to You because, I know You love me! I know you want me to! It's not like You're mad at me, and you're just sort of pouting until I get straight!

See, that's how we think. We think God's mad at me because I'm not doing something right. If I'll just do it right, then He'll be okay. We get it all backwards. If God gets the heart, the outward stuff will take care of itself. Well, you know one of the other things that so often happens with people who start down the road of doing it themselves, and the heart and the spirit gets out of what they're doing, and they wind up with a religious form: it becomes self-righteousness.

You think about the people in, was it Matthew 7? Jesus talked about them arriving at the end of the way and saying, Lord, Lord. What was their contention? Why did they think that God should receive them? It's what they did! Didn't we do? Didn't we

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BOOK CORNER

Delivered From Demons, by C. Parker Thomas

The story of a young girl's deliverance from demon possession and also a collection of a number of other articles relating to Satan's kingdom and activity, specially as it relates to the end of this present age. Suggested Price - \$6.50.

Does God Speak To You? by C. Parker Thomas

This booklet is composed of a wonderful series of articles published in the Midnight Cry Messenger during 1979. In this time of great spiritual darkness and deception what are the various ways in which He speaks and how can we learn to recognize His voice and respond? Suggested Price - \$3.50.

Examine Yourselves, By Phil Enlow

Paul said to "examine yourselves." There must be a way to do that. Can you say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day." 2 Tim 1:12. Suggested Price - \$7.50

The Gospel, By Phil Enlow

What is the gospel? Everyone thinks they know--but do they? In this day of watered-down "easy-believism" it is critical to know what real salvation is. What was the gospel that Paul preached? Suggested Price - \$3.00

How Do You Know You Are Right? By Phil Enlow

A spiritual challenge. A study of spiritual knowledge and how it is acquired. This is an area of critical importance in this hour of spiritual darkness and deception. We cannot afford to blindly rest in tradition. Suggested Price - \$4.00

Immortality, By Phil Enlow

What does the Bible teach about immortality, the future of unbelievers, the future of God's people? From the eight-part series in the MCM. Suggested Price - \$5.00.

The Keys of the Kingdom, by C. Parker Thomas

A clear study of the keys as they apply to us in today's world. Suggested Price - \$3.00.

Light in This Present Darkness, by Phil Enlow

From the series in MCM. Message for God's Remnant in the earth regarding the present hour of darkness. Suggested Price - \$7.00.

Lying Signs and Wonders, by C. Parker Thomas

A collection of articles concerning the end of the age exposing much deception as well as giving forth important truth needed by those who would be prepared for Christ's soon return. Suggested Price - \$7.00.

The Midnight Cry, by C. Parker Thomas

Contains two articles that set forth the truths concerning the midnight cry: what is it? who hears it? who makes it? what is its significance for us. A must for people who would understand this ministry. Suggested Price - \$1.00

Sex and Marriage in the Light of God's Word, by C. Parker Thomas

From a series of articles covering a whole range of scriptural and practical truth designed to help God's people in this important area. Suggested Price - \$7.00.

Sudden Death Overtime, by Phil Enlow

From the series published beginning in 2001. A look at our world and its prospects through biblical "glasses." What can we learn from history? What lies in our future? Why is the world like it is? Things every Christian should know. Suggested Price - \$7.00.

The Sure Foundation, by C. Parker Thomas

A collection of four articles published in the early 1980's on the important subject of the foundation believers have in Christ. Suggested Price - \$4.00.

Tongues: My Testimony, by C. Parker Thomas

Contains the article by the same name as well as an article entitled "Tongues Should be Tested" by Gerald McGraw in which he recounts lessons learned from testing to discover the spirit enabling someone to speak in tongues. Startling! Suggested price - \$3.00

What About Genesis? by Phil Enlow

How should we understand the Genesis accounts of the creation and the flood? Can a simple historical understanding of these accounts be defended in this age of scientific skepticism? Does it matter? Suggested Price - \$4.00.

What Does Deception Look Like? by Phil Enlow

Recognizing spiritual deception at the end of the age. What are its characteristics? Satan is waging all-out war and his chief weapon is the lie. As never before believers need to be grounded in bedrock truth. Suggested Price - \$9.95.

Your Adversary, By C. Parker Thomas

Awhile back, while looking through some of our oldest issues of the MCM, we uncovered this timely gem, published in about 1960! There is a simple directness and clarity in this teaching that will help anyone who desires to walk with the Lord and overcome in this hour. Suggested Price - \$2.50.

Note: The prices listed above are suggested with the thought in mind of simply covering the costs of printing and mailing these materials. It is not our intention to become "book-sellers," selling books for profit. Our desire is to get out truth that can help set God's people free in this critical hour. Please write to us at:

Midnight Cry Messenger

P.O. Box 685

Southern Pines, NC 28388 USA

First Love

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do? Didn't we do this? Wasn't that evidence that we're Yours?

Well, you look at this letter to the Church at Ephesus, no, it's not. That's not what God is after. If He has our hearts, He'll have our pocketbooks, He'll have our lives, He'll have our worship, He'll have our love for one another. It won't be feigned. We won't have to pretend. It'll be real because He inhabits His people! That's what He's looking for!

So, He calls upon His people to repent and turn around and recognize, to take personal responsibility. Lord, I need You. Lord, I see this area of my life, and show me where I don't see. Because, like I said, this condition is very self-deceptive, self-deceiving. It's so easy to get to this place and not even realize what is going on, because we are judging by what we see and by our activity. And God always judges by the heart.

I pray that God will apply this as it needs to be applied. I need it. I mean, it was almost like, God, who am I to preach this? I'm the one who needs it. But I believe it's the Lord reaching out to His people, just not turning them loose. But saying, listen, listen to My word. Listen to My heart.

Don't just do the right thing and think everything is good. Get to the heart. Let your heart be one with Me in everything that you do and all this stuff will absolutely take care of itself, and I'll be able to lead you. You won't be stuck in a form. You won't be stuck doing the same thing year in and year out, thinking you're doing great. And then, running into the issue later on of, well, why am I doing this? We need change.

You see the pattern of religion, how that begins to work? Well, way back somewhere, they started going down that road. If anybody is on that road, let's get off. As a movement, as people, let's say, Lord, we need You to be Lord. We need You to be the center of what we do, and what we think, and what we want, to lay everything at Your feet.

Show us where we're blind. Every one of us is blind in some area. Show us our need. Give us grace to just let Your Spirit fill us, and let that be the dominating character. Let that be the life! Isn't Christ our life? He's not just our pattern-maker, religion-establisher. He's our life! It's not about religion. It's about Him and His presence. Praise God!

God's Power

*A city full of churches,
Great preachers, lettered men,
Grand music, choirs and organs;
If these all fail, what then?
Good workers, eager, earnest,
Who labour hour by hour:
But where, oh where, my brothers!
Is God's Almighty power?*

*Refinement: Education!
They want the very best.
Their plans and schemes are perfect,
They give themselves no rest;
They get the best of talent,
They try their uttermost,
But what they need, my brother,
Is God the Holy Ghost!*

*We may spend time and money
And preach from wisdom's lore,
But education only
Will keep God's people poor.
God wants not worldly wisdom.
He seeks no smiles to win;
But what is needed, brother,
Is that we deal with sin!*

*It is the Holy Spirit,
That quickeneth the soul.
God will not take man-worship,
Nor bow to man's control.
No human innovation,
No skill, or worldly art,
Can give a true repentance,
Or break the sinner's heart!*

*We may have human wisdom,
Grand singing, great success;
There may be fine equipment,
But these things do not bless.
God wants a pure, clean vessel,
Anointed lips and true,
A man filled with the Spirit,
To speak His message through.*

*Great God, revive us truly!
And keep us every day;
That men may all acknowledge
We live just as we pray.
The Lord's hand is not shortened,
He still delights to bless;
If we depart from evil
And all our sins confess.*

Broadcasts

RADIO STATIONS

Monday - Friday

Stat.	Freq.	Location	Time
KAAY	1090 AM	Little Rock, AR	7:15 AM
KXEG	1280 AM	Phoenix, AZ	9:00 AM
KCNW	1380 AM	Kansas City, KS	12:15 PM 9:30 PM
WKDI	840 AM	Denton, MD	9:15 AM
KXKS	1190 AM	Albuquerque, NM	5:30 PM
WDZY	1290 AM	Richmond, VA	2:15 PM
WWVA	1170 AM	Wheeling, WV	9:30 PM

Short Wave Radio

WHRI ANGEL 1 – (Central & South America)

Mon.-Fri.: 0900 UTC-11.565 MHZ

Mon.-Fri.: 1600 UTC-21.600 MHZ

Mon.-Fri.: 2300 UTC-7.315 MHZ

WHRI ANGEL 2 – (Europe, Russia, Middle East & Africa)

Tues.-Sat.: 0015 UTC-5.920 MHZ

KWHR ANGEL 3 (Hawaii) – (Asia, S.E. Asia & South Pacific)

Mon.-Fri.: 0915 UTC-9.930 MHZ

For a current schedule of "Angel" stations go to www.whr.com/whr/program-schedules/, scroll down to "Detailed Schedule Search," enter Midnight Cry for the program title and then click "Start Search."

Television Broadcast

— (30 Minutes Weekly) —

Local Broadcasts

Albuquerque, NM - KAZQ - TV 32
Sun. 7:30 AM

Boone, NC - MTN-TV - TV 24
Cable 18 - Sat. 8:00 PM

Boston, MA/Manchester, NH
WBIN-TV - TV 18 - Sun. 6:30 AM

Chicago, IL - WJYS TV-62
Sun. 7:00 AM

Greenville, SC - WGGG TV-16
Sun. 7:00 PM

Harrisburg, PA - WGCB TV-49
Sun. 9:30 AM

Jacksonville, FL - WTLV - Ch. 12 HD
Sun. 6:00 AM

Los Angeles, CA - KDOC-TV 56
Sunday, 6:30 A.M.

Minneapolis, MN - WUCW-TV CW23
Sunday, 6:30 A.M.

Nampa, ID (Greater Boise area) - KCLP-18
Tues. 8:30 PM

Phoenix, AZ - KASW-TV CW6
Sunday, 6:30 A.M.

Salt Lake City, UT - KTMW TV-20
Wed. 7:30 PM & Sat. 10:00 PM

San Francisco, Oakland, California
KBCW TV-44 - Sunday, 6:00 A.M.

Seattle, Washington
KVOS TV-12 - Sunday, 10:30 A.M.

COMING EVENTS

November Meeting
November 25-28, 2015
Southern Pines, North Carolina

TV Network Broadcast

— (30 Minutes Weekly) —
The NRB Network (DirectTV 378)
Sun. 6:30 AM Eastern
Mon. 3:30 AM Eastern