

# Midnight Cry Messenger

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

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## Overcoming the Beast

by Phil Enlow

*Adapted from a message preached at the Bible Tabernacle on May 8, 2016, also used on the Midnight Cry TV broadcast in September, 2017.*

Last week, the subject had to do with how God works in our lives to prepare us for what He wants, individually. It wasn't just, trials have a purpose in some vague sense, but how God uses them, individually, very personally, to prepare individual Christians for their place in His kingdom.

And our place with respect to that is, of course, to stand fast in our faith, keep looking to Him and trusting Him through the process, and knowing that the process itself develops the quality of perseverance, which is never giving up, and that quality of perseverance is what takes us to the final goal. There is certainly a standing and a yielding and all of that to it.

During this past week, the Lord had several ways of reminding me that that's only part of the picture, that if we're going to be the kind of people God wants, there's more to it. And you can see it, certainly, in the writings of the New Testament.

Consider Paul's exhortations to Timothy, for example. He's writing to a younger man based on a lot of personal experience, recognizing that he has been through things himself. He's had to discover things about himself that weren't fun.

And I have a feeling that's where a lot of us are. We're having to reckon on the truth of what God is saving us from, seeing ourselves, in the big picture, as objects of God's mercy. Paul, the self-righteous Pharisee, got to the place where he could write with a straight face, this is something that's true, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst." (NIV).

So, instead of seeing himself as somebody who was pretty good but had made a few mistakes along the way, he saw himself as the very worst of sinners. Of course, that put him in a position of being able to look anybody in the eye, no matter what they were guilty of, and say, "There's hope for you because look what God did for me and I'm worse than you are!"

Now, that doesn't come naturally. We love to think of ourselves in ways that enhance our own vision of who we are. We like to measure ourselves against somebody else and if we see someone whose life is dissolute, caught in some obvious sin, and it's out there for everyone to see, we look down on them as though they're somehow lesser than we are. And the truth of the matter is every single one of us has exactly the same nature. It simply expresses itself in different ways.

And, if we're going to serve God, we're going to have to reckon honestly with the reality that we live in bodies that hate God. They have a nature, on the inside, that hates God, hates what is right, and absolutely will stand in our way, if we let it.

A lot of people think of salvation as simply God blotting out the guilt of our sins and giving us a ticket to Heaven. But there's so much more to what He has done for us and what He has purposed for us than simply blotting out our sins and saying, okay, go live your life and I'll take you to Heaven one day. He is doing a work of changing, of transforming, of giving us a different life.

But while we live here, His purpose in giving us that other life is that we may learn to live by it and not by the old one. And so, Paul's instructions

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## A Great Mystery Pt. 2

by C. Parker Thomas

(Editor's note: This article was originally published in the March-April 1976 issue of the Midnight Cry Messenger.)

### Unity Of The Spirit

Spiritual unity is certainly one of the greatest aspects of truth, if not the greatest, relative to the mystery of Christ and the church. The whole purpose of the cross and the sufferings of Christ was to bring us together into one body. In ten thousand ways Satan has deviously divided the body of Christ. He knows far better than we do the power and glory of this unity, therefore he works unceasingly to confuse and divide.

Although the unity of the body of Christ is not seen nor understood by many, it is a literal fact in the mind and purpose of God that we cannot deny. Remember Eph. 4:4-6 says, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all!"

I Corinthians 12:12-13 says, "For as the body is one, and hath many

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## Editor's Letter

Dear Saints,

Greetings once again in the wonderful name of Jesus! October has arrived here in North Carolina and we are beginning to see cooler weather. At the beginning of September many of us gathered in South Carolina for a Youth Camp with much blessing. We were at a different and much better facility and the young people had a lot of fun in their activities and in just being together.

But what mattered most was the evident work of God's Spirit in reaching hearts. During the Sunday evening gathering we heard many wonderful testimonies. Remember these precious young people. They are our future. They need the Lord!

The main article this time is adapted from a message preached in the spring of 2016 and used in a couple of recent TV broadcasts. A title like, "Overcoming the Beast" would, for many, cause them to think of an external threat like the "antichrist" or the devil. But our biggest enemy is actually the one we see when we look in a mirror. It is the fallen human nature with which we were all born. The reason Satan can influence us is simply that he has "inside help." Our old nature agrees with him against God.

The testimony of Jesus at the end of his earthly life was that the prince of this world had "no hold" on him. He had been tested in every point and found faithful. This puts him in the unique and wonderful position of understanding the battles we face while at the same time offering us the help we so desperately need that we might overcome. Heb. 4:14-16.

The other main article contains part 2 of short series by Bro. Thomas first published in 1976. To quote from my last editorial, "It deals with the great mystery referred to by Paul in Eph. 5:30-32, namely the church. I fear that most of what is called 'church' in our day is a far cry from God's intention. There is all too often so much tradition, form, and human effort mixed in that Christ Himself is absent, and yet, the religious machinery grinds on, the people unaware. I'm sure glad that even in the midst of today's confusion, God still knows every one of His own. He won't lose even one of those who put their trust in Him." John 6:37-40.

That's a wonderful truth to remember as the world spins more and more out of control. Thank God, in spite of everything we see, Jesus remains in control. Satan's rebellion will reach

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to Timothy are full of warnings about the need to overcome.

There's a scripture in 2nd Timothy chapter 2 where Paul has just finished talking about the fact that "The Lord knows those who are His...." But then he says in verse 19, "... and, everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

And here's the principle: "In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work."

And it's on the heels of that, he says, "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." And, there are other instructions, but this recurring message to Timothy is, don't just assume that because God saved you and He's called you to do a work that you're equipped to do that. You have a part to play and if you don't deal honestly with sin, and the principle of sin that would operate in your body, you're going to be hijacked. You're going to be rendered useless to the master.

And there's a scripture at the end of 1st Corinthians, chapter 9, where Paul talks about how he looked at his own ministry and his own life. He says in verses 24-27, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

"Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so

its climax. Jesus will reach every one of his with the hope of the gospel. Remember all God's saints in this challenging hour.

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

Your brother in Christ,  
Phil Enlow

## NOTICE

It has long been our policy to offer the printed *Midnight Cry Messenger* without charge to any who truly desired to receive it – and we intend by God's grace to continue doing so. But we also live in a time when the Internet has provided a powerful publishing platform and the MCM is also available there. You may be one who is content to read the paper online and no longer needs the printed version. If so, please let us know as the costs for mailing the printing version continue to rise. Of course, if you desire to continue with the printed version we are happy to send it to you.

that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

So, being saved, being genuinely even born again, is an awesome thing! It's wonderful! But if we're going to actually be useful to God in the world, there's going to have to be some overcoming, isn't there? There's going to have to be some reckoning, honestly, with sin. And I feel like that's something that God is bringing many of us to in a way that perhaps we haven't seen before. Am I wrong? Am I the only one?

I was thinking, the other day, of a scripture, and I'll just refer to it. You can read it later, but it goes all the way back to the beginning of Genesis, in chapter 4. And in Genesis 4, you read the account of Cain and Abel, two of Adam and Eve's children. And it talks about the fact that Cain did this and Abel did that.

But they brought offerings to the Lord. And obviously, there was a difference between them. The Lord doesn't explain it all, but He recognized Abel's sacrifice and did not receive Cain's and Cain was mad! And the Lord reached out to him and said, why are you angry? If you do well, won't you be accepted? But He says if not, sin crouches at the door and, "...it desires to have you, but you must master it."

That's an interesting picture of how the Lord portrays sin. You know, we think of sin as "sins," acts that God doesn't approve of. We think it's like breaking rules. But God pictures sin here, not as a bunch of rules, but as a beast, a powerful, angry, destructive beast that's ready to devour you.

I think there's a place for really coming face to face with that. How many of you remember that Paul did? Paul's concept of being right with God, at one time, was entirely based upon rule keeping. It was practicing a religion with all its rituals, observing its rules, refraining from this, doing that, and so on.

And, based on that, he was very confident of his righteousness before God – and he despised those who didn't measure up to that standard. And God had to take him all the way from that place down to where he was actually able to say – and it wasn't just something he said, it was something he believed from the depths of his soul – "I am the worst of sinners!"

What was it that accomplished that in him? We've talked about it many times. He came to a place, after he met the Lord, where in the strength of all his religious zeal he was really going to serve God. He was going to give it everything he had! His attitude was, "I'm going to obey God's laws and everything is going to be wonderful." The only thing is, he absolutely and utterly failed.

And I know there are people here who know exactly what he was feeling. The whole idea of law is based upon one simple thing: it's God demanding something of you that you, in your strength, rise up and do in order to acquire His favor. And an awful lot of people have that idea about God. He's just the Rule-maker in the sky.

So Paul still had to really learn something about why it was he needed a Savior to begin

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with. And he came all the way down to where he recognized, I want to do right, why can't I? What's going on here? I don't get this. He says, if I do what I don't want to do, then it's no longer me but it's sin that dwells in me!

He ran into that beast! He recognized, there's a beast in this body that lives here. As long as I'm in it, I'm going to be dealing with it. It's there. It's real. And so he cried out, oh God, what a "... wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (KJV). There was a real confrontation.

And my purpose at this point is certainly not to exalt sin and try to make us feel like, oh God, there's no hope. That's not the point at all. But if we're going to deal honestly with life and with serving God, we're going to have to reckon on the reality that we're up against something we have no answer for, in ourselves.

The Lord allowed me to experience something the other morning. It doesn't matter what it was about, but I woke up and felt this presence and it certainly was a spirit. But in one sense, I wasn't thinking, "This is a spirit." It was like, "This is that beast. This is sin."

And it was projecting onto me this feeling of, "I've got you. I'm more powerful than you. You cannot beat me. I rule over you. Your situation is hopeless. It's futile. No matter what you do, I'm going to win. I've got the upper hand."

Well, of course, thank God, that's a lie! But I won't ask you for a show of hands. How many of you ever really realize what you're up against? You've had some run-ins with that beast when you suddenly felt the terror of sin's power?

I'll tell you one thing it does. We were singing about Jesus and what He did: in taking upon Himself our sin, it wasn't just the guilt of a bunch of acts of sin, He **became** sin! I don't know how to even put it into words, the magnitude of what He did for us, to face that beast down, and to conquer it on our behalf! My God! What an awesome, amazing thing!

And so over and over again you will see Paul exhorting Timothy and Titus and Christian believers in general, and you get this feeling: don't you dare take sin lightly! Don't you dare just blow through life as though all you have to do is show up and just live your life and sin is not a problem anymore. If we're going to be God's people in an hour of darkness, we're going to have to reckon on the reality of what it is that we fight.

Paul didn't say, "Just show up and minister. God's called you. That's all you have to do." He said, "Fight the good fight of faith." I had a big fight to get up here today. Thank God for everything that was shared! I appreciate it! God put that into your heart, Matt, and others, to get up and share, because there's an honesty we need!

And I believe that we do need to be reaching out. We need to be fighting back. We don't just need to show up and expect, hey, God's salvation is so great, He's just going to take care of it. There is a part we play. There is, absolutely, a

part that we play. Timothy was not just told, as I say, to show up but, you have to fight. "Fight the good fight of the faith." (NIV).

The obvious question then is, how do you do that? And that's one that I've had to wrestle with. Thank God that He takes us through these things, though! We cannot be His servants and not go through the things that help us to understand what it's all about.

So, if you're going through a battle today with self, if you're going through a battle with your nature that wants to rise up and take control, God is allowing that because He wants you to understand the magnitude of salvation and He wants to turn our eyes to the solution, to the greatness of the salvation that He has given us so that we don't yield to that thing, we don't back down when the Devil roars in our face.

And I praise God! I mean, I praise God *for the battle*. I praise God for times when feelings aren't there. Because, praise God, we live by faith. There are times we're going to have to rise up and say, God's Word is true!

Well, just like I had to do this morning. I had to say, "Lord, okay. You've put this in my heart. I can't do anything about it. It's really not what I wanted to preach, because it's so real to me, it's so personal. Who am I to stand up and talk about these things?" And the Lord went the extra mile this morning, didn't He?

But I believe what He told me was true this week. He kept reminding me, "You're not the only one. You're not the only one." God's people are being tried in so many ways. If you want to live a defeated life with sin in control, in one way or another, you just get up in the morning and waltz through your life. Maybe say, "Hi Lord, how are You doing? See You later," so to speak. But you just simply live your life, in your own strength, doing what you want to do, and I guarantee sin will beat you every single time.

And if you're not even aware of that, you really are in a bad place. If you can live your life and you're not even aware that there is something that is wanting to rise up in you that is against God, that is wanting to take control of your life, that's a bad place to be. I'm thankful! I'm thankful for a sensitivity. I'm thankful for an awareness.

I read something online. It doesn't matter all the details. But it was somebody who was talking about being caught in a lifestyle. I guess I'll put it that way. And it probably isn't what you're thinking. But anyway, they were caught by something. And one of the things that was expressed in this was a sense of terror at a loss of control.

How many of you have gone down the path of a weakness in your life and you've reached the point where you don't have control anymore? You just kind of go right along and you know, this is not what it's supposed to be, but, somehow, you can't stop. That's a scary feeling.

But I'll tell you what, if we did not have an answer as to what the Bible teaches us on this subject and what we experience in our lives, if we didn't have an answer, we might as well turn the lights out and go home. There's no religion

you can practice that'll deal with this.

But I'll tell you, there's an answer that God has already set in motion. He gave laws, yes. But He didn't give them to save us. He gave laws to restrain evil among the Israelites in the Old Testament. It did a limited job but at least they knew what was right and what was wrong in His eyes.

But He also gave it to demonstrate to every single one of us that we are sinners and we need something beyond ourselves. We need to learn the same lesson that Paul learned. And if God is taking you through something like that in your life right now, do not be discouraged by it! Don't you give up! Don't you look at yourself in the mirror and say, "There's no hope," and give in to that beast that wants to look you in the eye and say, "I've got the upper hand, there's nothing you can do!" It's like Ron says: it doesn't matter whether you're up here or down here, we fight the same battles.

And God has arranged it that way. It's right that every single one of us, who serve God, has to fight the same battles. And so, don't you say, "I'm different from so-and-so. I can never amount to anything." God has a place for you in His kingdom but He wants every one of us to face that beast and to know how to defeat it. Praise God!

And so, the question is, how do you do that? Let's just look at a couple of passages of scripture. Galatians 5 is certainly one of them that we've used many times. And Paul is specifically dealing with the question of law and so that's not especially what I'm worried about. We've already talked about that. But the Galatian believers had come to Christ and somebody had come in behind Paul and tried to impose the law on them as though you need Christ *and* the law. And he says, you can't do that, you can't mix them.

But anyway, coming down to verse 13, "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love." So, that right there tells me that we have a part to play, that the course of our Christian life is not just something where we lay back and God performs operations on us: we have a part, we have a response, we have a responsibility. In the course of our life are we going to be victorious or are we not? Every one of us can do the wrong thing, can yield to the wrong thing.

Do you know the letters that Paul wrote were not written to unbelievers? Every one was written to believers, warning about things. And, as I say, just coming to Christ doesn't eliminate all this. Why else would Paul say, now you're saints, you've been called, you've come to Christ, so stop lying to each other, stop practicing sexual immorality, stop all these things.

Obviously, there's no instant transformation that happens, in a practical sense, in people's lives. You've got to teach and exhort and help people to understand what the Christian life is about and how to get there. You don't get there by rules, you get there by taking in the new life

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and living by it.

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself. If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.” Now, that’s written to Christians.

It’s a warning, isn’t it? There are a lot of people sitting in churches who would look down their noses at somebody who’s caught in sin and lying in the gutter somewhere. And from God’s point of view, they might be in worse shape because they are shameless gossips, they’re people who run people down with their mouths, they have all of these other kinds of self-righteous sins of the spirit, and they’ve got a strong hold and it defines their character. And yet there they are, pointing the finger down here.

“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

How many of us can say, “Lord, I love You? I want to serve You. I thank You for the freedom. Lord, have people point to me because they’re going to see You.”

You wonder why we’re experiencing some of the things that we’re experiencing right now. See, the Lord wants to take us closer and closer to that place. It’s not a leap where you suddenly are there. This is a process. This is a journey, not a destination. But it’s a journey we need to take and not just throw up our hands and say, “This is the way it is. I’m just stuck here.”

“...Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” (NIV). And the words behind this next expression about ‘the sinful nature desires what is contrary’ — there’s an adverse relationship. They are enemies. You have two literal life forces that are at war with each other!

As I say, sin is not just a list of things not to do. Those are expressions of a nature that is opposed to everything about God’s nature. And God’s nature defines His creation. The other life is like a cancer. It is a wicked life form that destroys everything it touches!

And what’s deceptive about it is it promises, and actually delivers, moments of pleasure! What sin nature does is take the gifts of God that He gave us in His creation and perverts them into a selfish use that totally twists His purpose in giving them to us in the first place.

God is not against pleasure. We haven’t even begun to taste what pleasure’s about. There are pleasures forevermore at His right hand. But they will be free from all of this selfish kind of thing that takes hold and takes people down the road like that woman said. She was terrified by how out of control this thing felt to her. It had become the master.

I’ll tell you, the pleasure that He gives doesn’t do that. It sets free. We can enjoy the sense of peace with God and the love and all the fruits that He’s given to us. We can enjoy them. The

closer we get to Him, the more real pleasure there will be!

But oh, there’s a war going on. There are these adverse life forms. We possess it. Don’t you look in the mirror and say, I’m different. You’re not. You’ve got it, and if you listen to it, if you go by it, it’s going to take you down a bad road.

We read recently the scripture in James 1 about not saying when you’re tempted, God’s tempting me, because we’re tempted when we’re drawn away by our own lusts. “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished...” (KJV). See, it’s not an instantaneous thing. “...Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Oh, thank God there’s an answer for that awful beast!

Thank God! I hope, in one sense, if you’ve never felt the terror of that beast that you will. Because what it does is help us never again to take it lightly, to blow it off and just think we can handle life. You can’t. If you just run through in your own strength, sin will take you over in one form or another. It will rule your life.

So, “They are in conflict with each other, so that you...” — this is the reason — “...So that you do not do what you want.” (NIV). This is the reason Paul felt that helplessness. It’s because they were adverse to one another.

“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.” And so now, he gives examples. “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious.” This is not sin itself, but this is what sin does. These are some of the things. “Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft: hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.” So, it’s not a comprehensive list, is it? “I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” That’s a description of the world.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Boy, we need that last one, don’t we? “Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.” So, Paul is constantly going back to what God has done for us, isn’t he? Thank God there’s always someplace we can look where there’s hope!

But listen to what he says here. Verse 25 is revealing. “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Now, what does that tell you? **They’re not the same thing, are they?** It’s possible to be born of God’s Spirit and have His life in you and yet not walk in accordance with that. Why would he spend so much time in the Scriptures warning about this issue if it didn’t matter?

You know, it’s quite a balance to take this thing so seriously that we recognize the power of that beast and yet, not to be discouraged, not to be down, not to be defeated, not to have the sense of futility that you could get if that’s all you looked at. I want to have that balance.

I believe Paul did, don’t you? He was honest enough to say, you have got a real enemy here. You’ve got something that, if you’re going to

serve God, you’re going to have to fight. You’re going to have to gain the upper hand. You’re going to have to rule over this thing if you’re going to successfully serve God.

But thank God we have got the answer to everything that rises up in here! There is a power that is greater that’s available to every single one of us! We didn’t earn it! We don’t deserve it! But God has given it to everyone who will take a hold of it.

And I know everyone who’s served the Lord any length of time, you know the difference between walking with the Lord, and there’s a measure of peace, there’s a measure of victory, it’s not just feelings, and then all of the sudden, you get tired, and you kind of drift. And the next thing you know, things start coming into your mind. You’ve got things that begin to work on you and begin to take you down roads. And I’ll tell you, if you’re not careful, it’ll take you down some bad roads. Thank God, we’ve got an answer.

But there’s that admonition, “Since we live by the Spirit...” We have His life. If we’ve come to Christ, if we put our faith in Him and recognize, Lord, I come to You as a sinner. I come to You because I need salvation. Lord, let the blood that was shed back there cover my sins. I need that new life. I need that new life that’s going to blossom and going to live forever. I’ll tell you, there’s a God who’ll answer a heart cry like that.

But then, the Christian life begins. Then is when we need to learn how to *walk* by the Spirit. And it’s not just religious rites and activities. It’s lifting our hearts to Him.

You know, when we’re awake, it’s just lifting our hearts and saying, “Lord, I love You. Lord, I need You. Lord, help me to solve this. “I feel this thing coming against my mind” — and it’s not just a bunch of empty words.

God has to teach us how to live with a consciousness of Him, that’s not just activities, not just, okay, I’ve got to read this, I’ve got to do that. You can reduce the Christian life to a bunch of duties if you’re not careful.

But I’ll tell you, there is something real that He’s describing here. It’s a real war, but God has made provision that you and I can have real victory. And so, I hope this helps all of us to understand some of the battles that we’re in.

Let me go to Romans chapter 6, because this is the one where Paul really deals with this issue in a very straightforward way. He’s just informed us that those who live by the Spirit, those who draw upon God’s grace in this life have the ability, by that grace, by that strength that we receive from Heaven, to reign in life. That is, we’re in charge. Sin’s not in charge. That’s what it comes down to.

And where sin got stronger and stronger because of God’s law, God’s grace is greater than that. Thank God! Thank God there’s a source of help and hope that we have in Him! It’s always greater.

But now, Paul goes back to the Cross and to what happened there and the resurrection and helps us to understand. And something more

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happened than simply Jesus dying for the guilt of my sins. It's that *He took me with Him*. I died with Him. It's not a matter of how I feel, not a matter of whether I even understand it, because the people to whom he was writing, this was new stuff, I'm sure, to them.

But this is something God did knowing that I was going to face the issues that I faced this week, the last week before that, wherever, whenever it was, the issues that you're facing right now, God knew that. God knew that there was something that was going to rise up in us that was contrary to Him that we're going to have battle against and overcome! And He already put us to death back there.

So, we're not trying to make something happen that hopefully will happen someday. We are laying hold of something that's already happened. Do you understand the difference? Think about it. Praise God! I'm in a position where I'm just right there with you, trying to lay hold of the reality of what God has done.

When He died, I died. When He was buried, I was buried. God put me in the ground. When He came forth, there was a new life. The life that's in me was in Him when He came out of that tomb. And now He has shared it with me, and He's shared it with you if you're His. Thank God, it's real!

Verse 8: "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again..." Thank God! "... Death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all."

It represented not just a death *because of sin*, it was a death *to it*! It was a rejection of that beast! He said in effect, "I'm going to face you and I'm going to beat you the only way that I can. I'm going to surrender my body to death, and I'm going to rise up with a new life that you can't touch." Praise God!

"...He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Here's where it gets down to the practical side, because if it was sort of an automatic thing, we come to Christ and, praise God, sin has no more power to do us any damage, why would he say what he's about to say? "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires." It would make no sense to say that if it wasn't possible.

"Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law..." (Thank God) "...but under grace."

There are areas of weakness in every one of us. Your area might not be getting drunk and

falling in the gutter somewhere, but you've got other things where Satan has had access to your heart, to your spirit, to your mind. And under the right conditions, he will cultivate that. He will work in that. There are habits that develop in the way we think, the way we act, and God is shining His light in our lives.

You wonder why the battles? God is interested in delivering us from strongholds that we may not even realize we have. And so, as painful as it sometimes is, as humbling as it is, thank God for that, too. We have reason to rejoice. We have reason to say, "Thank You, Lord for the light, because I didn't realize this had such a hold on me. God, help me! God, help me to be honest with myself! Help me to face what's going on, to realize the enemy has created a habit of thinking and acting!"

I had this thought also. It talks about, "don't yield," but when is it that we actually yield? When do we actually yield? I think I used this silly example one time. It was from the movie, "Smokie and the Bandit." Sheriff Buford T. Justice was a character in it.

He had caught some young punks trying to steal stuff from a car, and he left them standing with their hands on the car. He said, "Wait, my deputy will be here." And he said something like, "Don't even think about leaving." Then he said, "Well, you can think about it. Just don't do it."

But you know, that illustrates, I think sometimes, the approach we have. We think if we don't actually do something that it's okay. At what point are we really yielding? If you're letting negative thinking and angry thoughts or self-pitying thoughts, if you're letting those possess your mind, you've already yielded. Now, that may unfold and lead you down a path to an act, but the yielding doesn't happen down here, it happened back here.

It's a lot to think about, isn't it? But I'm so thankful that what Paul is talking about here is not simply a negative battle not to do stuff. We have another alternative. We don't just "not" yield to this. We yield to Him. There is a reaching out after God. There is a reckoning on the reality of what Jesus died to give us. There is something that is real that God has laid up for you in Heaven. It belongs to you! It belongs to me!

And the very fact that everybody is so quiet right now tells me that this is a battle. It's a battle to realize that, in spite of what I am in myself, that really is mine. Am I the only one who fights this battle? No! The tendency is, as soon as we feel, as soon as we realize the weaknesses, or as soon as we sense something that's not quite like it ought to be, our focus goes to that.

And suddenly I remember this glorious provision. Well, that's wonderful for somebody else, or later, or when I get myself back up to a certain spiritual level. I don't deserve it. I just can't quite bring myself to believe that it really is mine *now*.

You know, I believe with all my heart God is longing to teach us that that's the very time — **that is the very time** — if we're going to fight the good fight of the faith, that's the time we're

going to have to be willing to rise up and say, Lord, that's mine. Devil, you are lying to me. You are doing everything in your power to keep me as your slave.

Because Paul says, if you offer yourself to somebody, and you obey what they tell you, you are making yourself their slave whether they have a right to it or not. There are people here right now with strongholds in your lives and the reason is you yielded. I yielded. There are things to which we have habitually yielded in our lives that God longs to see us delivered from so we can be effective for Him.

But, thank God, He's not just standing up there with His arms folded, looking down at us with disgust, and saying, "Straighten up and fly right." He's saying, "I know what you're feeling. I've been here. I have the answer. I have a source of life that if you will exercise yourself, if you will simply pray, if you will lift your heart to Me, if you will praise Me, if you will fight against, if you will resist those lies and declare them to be what they are, if you will feast upon the promises of My Word, if you will do all these things, there's a source of life that will flow into you that will give you a strength to stand up and say, 'Devil, I don't have to listen to you. I don't have to yield to your lies. I don't have to go down that road. God has given me the victory.'" Thanks be to God who gives us the victory!

Praise God! That's from 1st Corinthians 15, if you want to look at that at the end of the chapter.

I want to go back to one scripture that I referred to in Timothy. I'm not even going to look up where it's at right now, but where he says, "Fight the good fight of faith..." (KJV). What does he say next?

In the King James — this is how I tend to remember it: "...Lay hold on eternal life." See, it's not just fight the good fight of the faith. Draw upon your resources! Get your will power geared up, and you'll...no! It's "lay hold." There's something there that is real. If we are not victorious in any area of our life, it's not because God has failed. It's because we are not laying hold of what He's given to us.

Just like the Israelites, God *gave* them the land, but they had to go and *possess* it. This body is the land He wants us to possess.

And so, along with God's call and God's working in our lives to make us into the vessels He wants, there's a part that we play. Like Paul, "we have this treasure in earthen vessels..." We're going to have to do some fighting. We're going to have to do some laying hold of what He has given to us through the Cross.

And so, I think the thought we need to be left with is not, oh my God, this beast is so terrible, and I have no chance. It's rather, I have all that I need in Jesus Christ.

His promises, His grace transcend everything that...I don't care how bad that beast is. I don't care how long He's been around. He was defeated at the Cross, and whether I can just rise up right now and suddenly be totally free, I can start. I can believe God today. I don't have

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## A Great Mystery, Part 2

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members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Regardless of how far apart we are geographically or theologically, we are one if we have been born again and have God's Spirit dwelling in us. I Cor. 6:17 says, "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."

### Vital Union

This union is so vital that our condition and state affects every other member of Christ's body regardless of what they believe or where they are. In writing to the Church at Corinth, Paul said, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." I Cor. 5:4-5.

From this scripture it is evident that Paul fully understood the unity of the Spirit which would enable him to be present when the church officially judged this brother who was guilty of fornication.

If the members of Christ's body ever realize that it is indeed a vital union of many members, it will make a great difference in their attitude toward each other. As members one of another (Eph. 4:25), we are not complete apart from our brother. We need every member of Christ's body, including the weak ones and those we think to be less honorable. I Cor. 12:18-23.

Every member of Christ's body has some gift, some grace, some measure of Christ that is needed by every other member. Some aspect of our spiritual life is enhanced and complimented by the life of Christ in our brother. Failure to recognize, honor and receive our brother is like trying to cut off our own hand or foot. I Cor. 12:15-26.

The life of God, in all his glorious attributes, dwelled in Christ, the Son. Col. 1:19, 2:9. On the day of Pentecost this glory and power was given to the church. Eph. 1:22-23. To avail ourselves of this glory and power we must recognize and receive the body that it resides in. This is really what Jesus is teaching in John 6:53 where he said, "...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

The very life of God is received as we receive the humanity this life dwells in. Despise and reject the humanity that God honors with his indwelling presence and you despise and reject God. Thus the scripture is fulfilled where Jesus said, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." The life of God cannot be received apart from this body.

### Local And Visible

Although there is a perfect spiritual union between every believer from Adam to the last soul that God calls, the hub of New Testament Christianity is the local visible church. This is where believers assemble together to hear the Word of God. This is where the ordinances are observed. This is where the authority of Christ rests to judge and settle differences. This is where Christ said he would be in the midst. Matt. 18:15-20. Heb. 10:25.

We must see the local visible church as the body of Christ in a given place. Gal. 1:2. Phil. 1:1. I Thess. 1:11. To the church at Corinth, Paul said, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

It will be noticed that Paul said they (the Corinthian Church) were the body of Christ, not the foot, the leg, the arm or a part of the body. For a body to be a body it has to have particular members. It would be deformed if it had four hands and no feet.

As carnal and imperfect as the Corinthian church was, it was a complete church or body. Enriched in everything by Christ in all utterance and knowledge, they came behind in no gift. I Cor. 1:5-7. As such, the church at Corinth had as much authority to loose and bind on earth as any other church. Matt. 15:18-19, 18:15-19.

Although Paul's ministry went beyond the confines of the local church, he recognized the church at Corinth as the body of Christ and sovereignly endowed with authority to act in matters of judgment. The sin of this particular member, that we have already referred to in I Cor. 5, was so great until Paul instructed the church to turn him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Though the church had this authority and should have exercised judgment, they were negligent in the matter until Paul wrote to them about it. From II Cor. 2:1-11, it seems the action of the church in judgment was used of the Lord to restore this erring member.

The action of the church in this case is a good example of the church using the keys of the kingdom to loose and bind on earth. Matt. 16:19. In this particular case God, himself, was withholding judgment, waiting for the church to act.

Although discipline and judgment are necessary in the church, the purpose should always be to deliver and restore. This is always the purpose of God's judgment concerning a believer, and it should be ours also. Gal. 6:1. Heb. 12:5-11. Beyond doubt the widespread emphasis of the body of Christ as being universal and invisible has clouded the revelation of the local church as the body of Christ.

For all practical purposes the church is local and visible. Although there are ministries that go beyond the confines of any one locality, practical Christianity recognizes the church as an assembly of believers in a given locality, watched over by local elders. Titus 1:5. Acts 20:17-28.

Needless to say, you cannot ordain elders over

a universal invisible church. And it is impossible to assemble together or tell your problems to a universal invisible church.

### Discerning The Body

Beyond doubt, failure to discern the body of Christ is the cause of much of our problems. Not only does it result in physical sickness and death but it also results in spiritual sickness and death. I Cor. 11:30. When we fail to discern the body we do not see the importance of the unity of the Spirit.

Of all the gifts and graces that might be present in the church, we have discovered that the most powerful and compelling witness is the unity of the Spirit. It truly takes the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost to bring about and maintain the unity of the Spirit. Where you have unity wrought in hearts by a work of God's Spirit through the Word you have love. This, of course, is why the unity of the Spirit is such a powerful and compelling force.

The purpose of Jesus' prayer, that we be made perfect in one even as he and the Father were one, was that the world might see and believe that the Father sent the son. John 17:21.

Although I certainly agree that we have room for improvement, I can personally testify that, time and again, people who have come in among us have been most amazed by the spirit of unity they observe. However I must add that it is no small task to achieve and maintain the unity of the Spirit. But it can be done by the grace of God. Paul gives us the key in Eph. 4:2-3. "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

And, of course, discerning the Lord's body in the matter of wisdom and counsel and judgment is absolutely essential. This will also put a stop to the freelancing independent spirits that get such great revelations they don't need to walk with the body of Christ. In many such cases these people have received an exalted spirit (demon) which deludes them into believing they are spiritually superior to the church.

### Freedom

There are many misconceptions about the freedom we have in Christ. Many quote the scripture which says, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

"See," they say, "we are free. We don't need any church or preacher telling us what to do. We go as the spirit directs us and are in bondage to no man." This is what the Jews said in rejecting Christ. John 8:33. Many so-called spirit-led individuals who spout this philosophy in the name of Christ are rebels against God, his Word and his body, the church.

Freedom, like all other principles, is a relative thing. If a poor horse was tethered to a hitching post day and night for weeks and was suddenly turned loose in a nice 10-acre pasture, he would kick up his heels and run wild with delight because of his newfound freedom.

However, if there were horses, cows and other

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farm animals in this pasture, his new found freedom wouldn't give him the right to run, kick and bite the other animals. He would have to live in harmony with his new environment, under the watchful eye of Farmer Brown. Otherwise, he might be led back to the hitching post.

When we become a citizen of God's kingdom, we are baptized into one body and made to drink into one Spirit. I Cor. 12:13. We don't just become a part of the mystical church but a part of a local visible church in a given place. Frankly, I'm afraid of these so-called Christians that have been fathered by freelance ministers who claim to have been set free from all the religious systems of men.

Spiritual babies need mothers as much as physical babies do. They also need fathers who won't desert them the first time an attractive harlot comes by.

Our God is a practical God. His true church gives birth to his children and they are fathered by the head of the Church, Jesus Christ. Many bastards have come forth, but they are not God's children. It is only when Zion travails that spiritual children are born into God's kingdom. Heb. 10:8. Isa. 66:8-9. Only the seed of Christ, activated by the anointing of God's Spirit, can produce children. And it is this seed that will endure forever. Psalms 89:29.

And though they are set free from the curse of the law and the penalty of sin, they are babes that need to be taken care of by a good mother (church). They need the sincere milk of the Word that they might grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The saying that "the world has yet to see what a man can do who is totally surrendered to Christ" is very misleading. It makes no difference how dedicated a person is; he can only minister according to the measure of faith that is given to him. Rom. 12:3.

In addition to our faith being governed by the type of ministry we have, faith grows and develops as we exercise ourselves in spiritual things. Heb. 5:14. Even as our body and mind grows and develops into greater strength and capacity, so should the spiritual man. Growth and development require a well balanced diet and proper exercise. Where the diet and exercise is lacking, growth and development is stunted.

Dedication in itself will not take the place of these things. This is also the reason the church is spiritually weak and anemic. How can we minister a deliverance we have not experienced? We cannot minister health and vitality that we do not have.

The development of the Church is dependent on the ministry that it has. Everything brings forth after its own kind. Not only must the ministry have a knowledge of truth that will set the body free from many traditional hangups, but it must also minister faith that will enable the church to exercise itself in spiritual things.

Under the one congregation and one pastor system, the rest of the body has had very little

opportunity to exercise itself in spiritual matters. And, under this system, the preacher served only the denominational diet instead of the living bread which comes down from heaven by the Holy Ghost. The prophet saw this day and said, "For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean." Isaiah 28:8.

If the fullness of God in knowledge, wisdom and power dwells in Christ's body, the church, there must be some means of manifesting that life. This is a question that must be answered. Somehow, some way, the body must be liberated to express this life.

Hitherto man has restrained such freedom in the church lest the wrong kind of spirit manifest itself. But this is not the answer. It is true that if God is free to manifest himself in our midst, demonic power is also free and is subject to take advantage of this freedom to manifest itself.

Whenever we seek to curb or hinder the liberty of the body from manifesting the wrong spirit, we also hinder the freedom of the body to manifest the life and power of Christ. The truth is that both should have liberty to come forth in manifestation.

I Thess. 5:19-20 says, "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings." If we quench not the Spirit and despise not prophesyings, it is evident that liberty is also given to the wrong kind of spirit to manifest itself. However with liberty there also comes responsibility. What comes forth should be judged by the body. This is why I Thess. 5:21 adds these words, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

Without judgment you cannot give liberty to the body to freely express itself. Otherwise you will have confusion, contention and strife. This is the reason the one preacher or pastor system developed in the beginning. The church must first be taught and prepared for body ministry and the necessity of judgment.

### In The Midst

Another reason the Spirit of unity is so vital is because it is when we are walking together as a body that Christ takes his place over us as head. Matt. 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

To be gathered together in his name is not a random gathering together of professing Christians. It is a body that has been spiritually and scripturally formed together into one. They have been baptized into his name and become one flesh with him. They have his name. A spiritual and legal transaction has taken place. They are actually married to Christ and have a legal right to use his name in loosing and binding on earth.

Independent spirits, claiming to be Christians within or without some church systems, have no part nor lot in what we are talking about. This is why Christ is not in the midst of so many groups claiming to be his church.

Though claiming to be Christians, this lack of spiritual union prevents the church from having the covering of safety and protection that Christ's body has when he is indeed in their midst. Only when we are moving together as a

body, do we have the glory and protection of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. After the sin of Miriam and Aaron, God removed the protective cloud covering from over Israel, and Miriam was smitten with leprosy. Num. 12:10.

It is this presence of Christ in our midst that Satan hates. Surrounded by this divine presence the church becomes an impregnable fortress that Satan's forces cannot enter. When Christ is present in this manner, the church moves forward. The works of darkness are exposed and Satan's kingdom is destroyed. With the unity of the Spirit, the church is invincible.

### Spirit Of Division

This is also why Satan ever seeks to divide the body of Christ. The Satanic motive behind most conflicts in the church is to divide. It is amazing how clever and adept Satan is in creating divisions through one means or another.

One real tragedy about division is that good and innocent people are often involved. They are made to suffer along with the guilty. Division causes roots of bitterness to come forth and defile others. Worst of all, the Holy Spirit is grieved and the testimony of Christ is hurt in the earth.

The spirit of division often starts through people who have joined themselves to the body without being truly converted. In fact, Satan actually plants such people among God's people to create division. This is one of the tactics he uses to strangle and stop the forward progress of the church. When unconverted people become the ruling majority in a local church or movement, that church or movement dies. It may continue the outward form but it ceases to minister the life of Christ to men.

Although Satan would much rather cause division among the leadership in Christ's body, he will take whatever he can get. If he can't get a mile he will take a yard, if he can't get a yard, he will take an inch. If he can't get to a strong influential member, he will defile a weak one.

The reason he desires to divide the leadership is because that is where he can do the most damage to the body. Leaders are your most respected and influential members. People follow leaders. When leaders are led astray by the spirit of division, the people are led astray. When leaders begin to feud with one another, the people begin to feud with one another.

It is through the ministry of Christ to the church that Christ, the head, leads his people. So division is not just brother being separated from brother; it is separation from Christ and God. This is what Satan is after.

Another reason Satan works so hard to divide the church is because he cannot get in without division. Division opens the door for all kinds of evil spirits to enter the church. In the very last days before the coming of Christ, Babylon, which epitomizes division and confusion, will become the habitation of devils and the hold of every foul spirit. Rev. 18:2.

The key to the blessings of Christ and our protection from Satan and his evil host is the

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## Overcoming the Beast

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to worry about tomorrow or yesterday. I can put yesterday under the blood. I can let God take care of tomorrow.

Right now, I can stand there and say, "God said this. This is where I stand. I do not have to listen to you. I am going to become the slave, as Paul put it, to righteousness rather than a slave to sin. And I can do that because His grace is greater." And so, in my pursuit of what you have called me to, I'm going to stand when You allow something in my life that tests my faith.

But this is the greatest test. This is the greatest battle we fight. It's not the devil out there. It's in here. It's what's in here, and God has given us the victory over this, as well. His salvation has touched every issue that you and I could ever face. So, if your life is caught by something, I want to point you to Jesus. If you're fighting a battle and you're discouraged, I point you to Jesus. He is the answer!

He rules, and he reigns! He didn't do that for Himself! He did that and went to the Cross because of us and our need. And I don't want to be one that says it's not enough. It *is* enough, all that He did. Thank God for Jesus Christ.

So, "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." It's there. It belongs to you, because He paid the price. You and I don't have to earn that. We don't have to pay it. He did it. It's complete. To Him be the glory forever and ever!

Praise God! I believe, with all my heart, God is bringing forth a people who are going to rise up and begin to say, "No," to things that we have been caught by. And we're going to do it, not because we're strong or worthy, because He has won it. He has won the battle at the Cross. To Him be the glory. Praise God!

### Excerpt from Online Frank Viola Blog

The kingdom of God is the true empire and it stands against all other empires, allegiances, lords, and kings.

The only kingdom that will stand in the end is the royal domain of Jesus Christ. All other kings will be displaced. All other rulers will be uprooted.

The gospel of libertinism says, "You are welcome in God's kingdom, and you don't have to change."

The gospel of legalism says, "You are not welcome in the kingdom unless you change."

The gospel of the kingdom and Jesus Christ the King say, "I welcome you into my kingdom, and as a result, you will change."

The kingdom of God confronts you and me. The future has invaded the present. The life of the age to come stands before us, calling you and me to enter and enjoy it.

The kingdom demands a radical decision. So radical that it's put in terms of "pressing in" and "taking it with violence." This is the true "radicalization" to the true "empire." All other allegiances are counterfeits. All other pursuits are distractions.

## A Great Mystery, Part 2

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unity of the Spirit in walking with our brother. This will require subjection to one another in the church such as most of us have never experienced before.

### Hidden Treasure

This is indeed a great mystery; called by Jesus in Matt. 13:44, the "treasure hid in a field." The field is a type of the earth from whence God fashioned the body of Adam in the beginning. This is why Paul says, "...we have this treasure in earthen vessels..." II Cor. 4:7.

The field is not the whole earth but a very small and particular portion that has been chosen and prepared to bring forth fruit. John 15:16. Heb. 6:7-8. This field is that very small remnant of humanity whose earthen vessels hold the treasure that is Christ.

It is very difficult for man to find this treasure because of where it is hid. When man thinks of God he looks to past religious history, the prophetic future or the mystical God of heaven. He looks in every direction but the right one. He knows too many negative things about the flesh of man to look in that direction. It is beyond human conception to think that God would clothe himself in sinful human flesh.

This is the great mystery that has to be revealed by God himself. This is also why Satan constantly works to make the church look bad. He knows that the natural, sense-governed man cannot see Christ come in the flesh because of the flesh itself.

It makes no difference how good or righteous a man might be, the natural man is prone to place all flesh in the same category. Unbelief sees only evil and human infirmity. This is why the masses of humanity could not see God in Christ. This is also why unbelieving man, controlled by the spirit of anti-christ, will never find this treasure nor understand this great mystery.

Until the church regains a knowledge of the truth hidden in the "great mystery" of Eph. 5:30-32, it will remain weak and anemic. This truth, walked in, will set us free. John 8:31-32. God alone can reveal this great mystery to us.

Thank God for Psa. 25:14 which says, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."

Like the healing waters of Ezekiel 47:1-12, as the tide of truth rises higher and higher it will bring healing to every thing it touches. Beyond doubt, one of our greatest problems is failure to discern the body of Christ.

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*Monday - Friday*

Stat.	Freq.	Location	Time
KXEG	1280 AM	Phoenix, AZ	9:00 AM
WEMM	107.9 FM	Huntington, WV	11:00 AM
WWVA	1170 AM	Wheeling, WV	9:30 PM

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### WHRI ANGEL 1

Australia/New Zealand

Mon.-Fri.: 0900 UTC - 12.015 Mhz

East/Central Africa

Mon.-Fri.: 1600 UTC - 21.610 Mhz

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Mon.-Fri.: 2315 UTC - 7.315 Mhz

### WHRI ANGEL 2

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— (30 Minutes Weekly) —

### Local Broadcasts

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Sun. 7:00 AM

**Dallas/Forth Worth** - KTXD TV-47  
Sun. 8:00 AM

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

**Harrisburg, PA** - WGCN TV-49  
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— (30 Minutes Weekly) —

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Monday - 3:30 AM Eastern

### SacFaith TV - Sacramento, CA

Monday - 8:00 AM Pacific Time

Tuesday - 8:30 PM Pacific Time

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