

# Midnight Cry Messenger

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

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## The Missing Ingredient

by Phil Enlow

For the last several months I have had a recurring burden. I believe it is from the Lord. You be the judge. This burden concerns a critical ingredient missing in much of modern Christianity.

And along with the burden the thought has often arisen in my mind, “And just who are you? What gives you any right or authority to speak about the things you are concerned about?” Of course, the simple answer would be that in myself I am nobody of consequence. The issues that concern me affect me as much as they do anyone else. I am in no position to speak “down” to others but rather seek only to share the burden with those to whom God gives ears to hear. Again, you be the judge — prayerfully.

### One Inch Deep

I once heard the American church described as “3000 miles wide and one inch deep.” Ouch. But is that not an accurate description? Thank God for every pocket of genuine life but the average church of today bears little resemblance to that of the New Testament, even considering all the problems addressed by Paul in his letters.

That is hardly news to any thoughtful observer of the modern church. Indeed the proposed solutions to making the church more effective and relevant seemingly have no end. In their zeal to appeal to modern society many churches have become “seeker friendly” — a euphemism for compromising the message, tailoring it so that it appeals to people’s natural tastes and desires. I doubt any reasonable person would call Peter’s message at Pentecost, “seeker friendly,” but it surely was effective!

We see many other attempts at “success” and “relevance” that include coffee bars, contemporary music, small groups, age-segregated ministry, seminars — the list goes on and on. I don’t want to go to the extreme of saying that God is automatically shut out because of these forms but the truth is that much of it is purely human, the product of a religious effort to attract people based on their natural desires. The idea is to attract them on that basis, then at some point to

get them to “accept Jesus.”

How easy it has become to fill churches with lost members who have never had a genuine saving encounter with the living Christ. Their true need has never been confronted by the Holy Spirit. They have never been brought to true repentance and faith and been born of God. They may be active and even enthusiastic in their religious profession — but they are lost.

So much of the modern church is busy seeking “success” — as defined by a worldly standard — numbers, excitement, programs, buildings, money, reputation. But what about heaven’s standard? How much is mere “wood, hay, or straw”? 1 Cor. 3:12-14. Will it stand the fire? And how much of it is even built upon the true foundation?

Much of the modern church differs little from the world in any meaningful way. It is simply the world dressed in religious clothes. As a result much of the world mocks — and hell laughs in triumph. Satan is running the show. I am keenly aware that some of the world’s reaction reflects the gathering darkness of the end of the age but much of it must be laid at the door of the professing church. The salt has lost its saltiness. Matt. 5:13.

I am also keenly aware that much of this professing

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## I Stand in Awe

by Kristen Phillips

I awoke this morning, considering what I would say if asked about Jesus, and what he can do. I was floored, to say the least, at how well my mind was working, minus coffee and any awake time at all. I thought about how I sing so many songs that talk about praising him endlessly and how full my heart is of love for all that he has done. How can I ever stop singing his praises? It is never far from mind how Jesus truly lifted me. I stand in complete awe that he took my sin and shame and utter hatred for him and changed me into the person I am now. He loved me through my hate, my anger, my resentment, and my bitterness. I stand in awe; he loved me anyway—completely. He suffered for me, took upon himself all that I have done, leaving nothing for me to pay. He was mocked; with love, He bled for me, even though I hated everything. He did not hold my hate against me nor consider me too far gone. He saved me—me, the Kristen, who sinned continually and hated completely. In tears I sit,

knowing I owe all to Him. My life, my husband, my parents, my child, my hope, my voice, my song, and my very breath are His. I wake every morning knowing that every day truly is a gift, not because I live or have life, but because He gave me joy, peace, faith, and hope. Life is really worth living now because He lives in me.

I sing for him; I live for him. There will never be enough words of thanks for me to give Him. There will be never a song written that could spell out the awe and love and humility I feel for Him. He took a wretched person like me, broken, used, and torn—exchanging ashes for beauty. As I sit, the words run through my heart; “how great thou art.” If asked, “What can He do,” I will answer, “There is nothing He cannot do.”

I have learned He can do anything at any time; a person must only trust, let go, surrender all, claim His promises

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**Editor: Phil Enlow**

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## Editor's Letter

Dear Saints,

Greetings to all in the wonderful name of Jesus! When I last wrote, Bro. Tony Talbert and I were about to embark on a month-long visit to various overseas locations in the Philippines and India. By the Lord's grace we did indeed make the trip and return safely!

It is always a rich blessing to fellowship with brothers and sisters in other places and share the wonderful blessings we have in Christ. When we make such a trip it is not only to give; it is also to receive – and we did.

Such opportunities remind us of the truth of 1 Peter 5:9 where we are encouraged to resist the devil, “standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.” Despite language and cultural differences people are basically the same everywhere and have the same needs. I'm glad that the Lord's heart reaches out to people of *every* tribe, tongue and nation. We are made one family in Christ.

Remember those we met. Pray that the Lord will enable each one to run the race that our Lord has “marked out” for them (Hebrews 12:1-2). Some are reaching into heretofore unreached areas. Pray that the forces of darkness will be driven back by Christ's presence and power and that souls will be rescued by God's grace.

When we returned in mid-November we had a little over a week to get back on Eastern Time, try to get caught up with work, and get to the November meeting in Jacksonville! It was a busy time but God's grace is always enough.

The Lord's presence was very real in that meeting and we are thankful. One of the brothers we had been with in India, Bro. Philip Thomas, was able to be with us. Others came from a number of different places with one desire: to hear from the Lord – and I believe we did.

We enjoyed our regular evening services, a men's meeting, a Saturday morning wed-

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and believe. He will do the changing. No one has to pay for this life He gives; all can take freely. Some will ask, “Why all this for free?” Love is the answer.

A person should never underestimate the power of a seed planted in a child's heart. I knew who Jesus was and what He had done for me a long time before I truly understood exactly what it meant. I knew I had been taught that He died for me. However, it took time for it to sink into my hard head and begin to soften my bitter, hate-filled, rebellious, lonely, hard heart. The seed that was planted did grow.

For some, the lessons come with time and pain and sorrow, which lead to tears and surrender, but finally to peace and joy. The words we speak to one another are important. No matter how small the words

ding, and a time of food and fellowship after the wedding. The Lord's presence was wonderful throughout. To him be all the praise.

This month's main article is pretty self-explanatory. It is the fruit of a lifetime of observation of at least parts of the modern church world. Outright error is one thing but the need I see – in myself and in others – is the need to see beyond simply saying and doing “the right things” and expecting God's blessing to automatically follow.

We need the kind of relationship that Jesus had with his Father — one of complete dependence. May God bring us to that place, and so much the more as we see the end drawing nearer. Holding fast to our traditions isn't enough. We need Christ's presence and power more than ever.

Last issue we ran a small “teaser” from Kristen Phillips' testimony. This time the entire article is included. I know you will be blessed. How many situations appear to be totally hopeless — and they are, from a human point of view. But nothing is impossible with God!

There is also a short poem by Bro. Lawrence Peter Medici, a prisoner with not only a life sentence but also cancer. Yet in the midst of it all he has had a genuine saving encounter with the Lord that is wonderfully expressed in this and in other poems and testimonies he has shared with us. His earthly circumstances are certainly trying yet there is a hope that reaches far beyond all that we see here.

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

Your brother in Christ,  
Phil Enlow

of encouragement may seem or how trivial a testimony of God's grace may sound, seeds are planted in those that hear. When you see a person whose eyes were dead and had no light transformed into a person filled with the love and glory of Him, there are no words, only the very pure fact and realization of His power. I remember as a young person, sitting in services and hearing Brother Thomas. His words would reach down into my heart, causing it to pound. I remember reaching for the Lord while singing in church services, and I remember what it felt like when His presence filled the room. Nothing has ever been its equal—no drug, drink, person, experience. Nothing ever filled me with peace. I remember going forward at altar calls and crying; I wanted Him. However, the person that I was as the time wanted the world more. I wanted to have fun and not have rules; I wanted to experience the life I wanted. Thank God I was His and He knew, much like with the prodigal, what I would have to experience, but I would be back. I am thankful that He loved me, and that He protected me through everything I went through. He was with me all the time. This cannot be doubted because if He were not with me always, I would not be here now. The seed was planted; it is always worth the time to teach and instruct our children because they are listening, even though we may not think so.

I cannot remember the first time I got high or drunk, but in the beginning I thought I had found what I was looking for. I felt nothing when I was wasted. I assumed I was feeling what I yearned for, peace. I did not care about school or my life or my body, or anything. I just floated there, and then—it owned me. It did not take long; I did not just want it anymore; I needed it. It was the only way I felt okay. It kept the voice in my soul at bay. I felt bad for the things I had done; I felt conviction. In the bottom of my drunken, high heart, I knew, on some level, I was wrong.

To do anything, I had to drink. Because each night, I would do more that I needed to run from. Only drinking provided me with the ability to not care; it fueled my anger. I thought, who cares what people think, right? So I ran; I ran for years. The drugs were not far behind the drinking. After a while, things started to really pile up, and I needed release.

I continued to run. I did everything possible to alter my mind and body from reality. Because of all I had done, I hated myself. I could not go to God for help or so I thought. I was angry at Him for things that had happened to me. Full of bitterness and

hate, I knew coming to Christ would end my life; I would have to give up so much. Looking back, I see how crazy it was for me to think this way. Because all I was doing—the drugs, the drinking, the men, the lifestyle, I thought it made me “free;” however, it only enslaved me. I was not free.

For fifteen years I drank and used drugs. Towards the end, I drank in the morning to keep from being sick; I drank at work; I drank alone; I always drank. I was arrested twice and charged with DUI. I tried to take my life, and ended up in the hospital. Afterwards, I was sent to a state mental hospital for detox, where I had DTs, including seizures and hallucinations. Then I went to rehab. By the grace of God, I was delivered and have been sober for almost ten years. One would tend to think that this mercy He had on me would have been enough to drive me to my knees in surrender; it was not. Anyone who knows me will tell you I am hard-headed. Thankfully, God, in His wonderful mercy and gracious love, did not take the gift of sobriety from me. I remained sober. The devil found another way to try to destroy me, kill me, and end me, which is what he wants. The Bible says, “He is a lion seeking whom he may devour...”

To say the least, the devil is smart. As soon as I drank too much and lost that little bit of control, he knew he could come in and have free reign over my thoughts. I reached a point when I was no longer steering the wheel; the devil knew the moment this happened. I would be remiss not to realize he took that opportunity to come in and make my life his own. For this reason, so many crimes happen under the influence of drugs and alcohol—violent crimes that boggle the mind and make us cringe. Furthermore, because of its dangers, drinking in excess is warned against in the Bible. The trick of the devil is that he shows the worldly things, the luxuries, the feeling of being high and living one's own life—freedom—all the while, blinding a person to what is being done to the mind, the body, the life, and the family.

When I hated God, He loved me. How amazing is it that even though I cursed His name, I was so filled with anger, blame and rage—I screamed to the sky, hating everything—and wondered how He could forgive me. How could He still love me? Then suddenly, to my bones, I understood. He loved me! Nothing I had done would change that love. I remembered the verse in the Bible that speaks about the many things that cannot remove his love from me, “... neither death nor life, neither angels nor

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demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” I was so thankful, and still am, that his love for me is not contingent on how eloquently I pray or how many things I do in his name. It is not about measuring up to a set of rules or standards or about being as “good” as the person next to me. He is a friend of sinners, and I was like the woman at the well in awe that he could love me—a harlot, a drunkard, a drug user—an angry, bitter, hate-filled person. The sins I had committed—very big things against God and nature—and He still loved me. He looked past my guilt and sin and hate and all that I was; He saw my need and saved me anyway, loved me anyway, lifted me anyway. He knew all this when He was suffering on the cross, bleeding for me, dying for me, loving me. He was crushed for my sin. How amazing and worth everything to me!

In all the places I looked for love, freedom, and peace, he was there the entire time, ready to give to me freely. I am thankful salvation is not about the law or following rules and regulations. I am thankful for His gift to me. I am so very thankful he changed my wants. It is not about trying to get into Heaven, or trying to do the right things and somehow earn His gift to me. He simply changed my heart to one that wants to do the right things for no other reason except they are good and pleasing to Him. After all he has done for me, how can I give less than all I am to Him? He convicts my heart, and I am thankful. I am thankful to hear that still, small voice, and I can talk to him anytime. What a great God I serve! How lucky I am that he gave his life to know me and for me to know him—all for love!

After being delivered from my addiction issues, I had about two years where I was just learning to live again as a sober person. Then things worsened. It is hard to describe the type of darkness I ended up in and, to this day, the only description fitting is complete darkness. It began with anxiety, which I had always struggled with to some degree. I chose to go see a psychiatrist. At this point, I was put on about four different medications and diagnosed with a whole package of disorders. This began a horrible time in my life, that to the best of my recollection, lasted for around two or three years. At which time, my first psychiatrist

died of cancer, sending me to a new one, who put me on eight different medications and tacked on a few more disorders. I was in and out of mental hospitals almost every month for suicide attempts and for harming myself to the point that it required medical intervention. At one point, the doctors thought about permanent residential care. This was a time in my life where I gave up. I wanted to die and believed that nothing mattered anymore. I was crazy, so they said. However, looking back, even then, I think I knew it was the Devil on my shoulder, in my mind, polluting my thoughts and giving me ideas of how to destroy myself.

I stopped taking care of myself and sunk very deep into despair and madness. I do not use those words lightly. Some of the most horrible sins I have committed were done in this time frame, and it was all because I really believed I had gone too far. For a while, it seemed others, even my parents, thought I was going to die. Mary, my step-mother, told me that every time the phone rang, they feared I was dead. Nearing the end of this time in my life, I ended up living in a dilapidated trailer with no heat or air, feeling the cold of 40 degrees or the heat 100 degrees outside. I have little recollection of much due to how medicated I was. My parents rescued me from there and moved me to my grandmother’s house. At this time, I came off a very strong medication; I thought I was dying. I could not sleep, eat, or talk. My eyes were dilated; I was throwing up. I was out of my mind with crazy thoughts. In the middle of the night, I would call my father crying, and he would lovingly tell me to pray—to hit my knees and pray. Finally, in my most weak and despairing moment, I did. I hit my knees in front of the bed, and through tears and crying, I uttered the only words I could manage, “God please help me.” I cried, and I shook. He heard me, my gut wrenching cry. The moment of my true surrender—it was not pretty, it was not eloquent; It was real. I wanted Him forever. My life began to change. For a while, I had been attending services again, and as my mind began to clear, the Lord began to speak to me. I began to get better. Once again, He delivered me, and this time, when he reached to hold my hand—not for a short while—but for always, I reached back.

As I sit here now, I am so thankful for my father and Mary, whom I choose to call my mother, because they loved me through it all. Through the time in my life when I was supposed to be a grown up, but when I was actually the most broken. As I carry my own child today, I know now the importance of

having a God-centered home and a united parental unit. My parents never judged me or stopped praying. The environment they created where I could be honest with them and come to them with all that I had done, made it possible for them to pray for me properly and to understand me.

Today, my husband, Michael, and I want this for our children, too. Because as dark as the world was when I was out there, we have not seen anything yet. Satan is being loosed like never before, and we are going to need to be strong Godly-praying parents, who listen and love. Today I am married to a wonderful man who loves the Lord and me. He too, in spite of all that I was, looked at me and saw my heart, loving me with a love only God can give us for each other. I am closer to my parents than I ever dreamed I could be. Mary is my best friend, mother, and anytime laugh partner. Someone spoke of how we have grown together and that is so very true, because, while she may not have brought me into this world, she most certainly gave me life. The Lord has done so much in both of us. I am thankful for everything I went through because there is not a moment of my life that I doubt His power or His love for me. It reaches to the highest star and truly to the lowest hell. I am blessed to sit under the ministry at our church, and the Lord continues to speak to me and grow me up more each day. Although I still falter and make mistakes as we all do, He gently speaks a word of encouragement, and I grow each time. I am blessed to sing with the choir and even with Mary. I get to lift up and glorify His name, which is what it is all about. When I am singing, I imagine that He is standing next to me, because He is. I am singing to him, praising his name because he so faithful and worthy. I hope that if anything is evident from my testimony, it is His power and grace and mercy. I hope that it shows that in myself I am nothing, and it is the perfect picture of how His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

To anyone who thinks your sins are too great. There is almost nothing I have not done, and He loves me just the same. He bore our sins for love, for me, for you, for everything we have done; Jesus paid it all. Come to him and surrender to Him. What you leave behind will never equal what you gain. Sleeping peacefully and filled with his love, joy and hope is the most amazing thing in my life!! When God becomes your all, your life will be worth living. Because He will be living in you, the darkness will vanish, and you will be set free from the prison in your mind. In the end, it was not

drugs, alcohol, relationships, medications, doctors, or my delusional freedom that saved me. It was and is daily, Jesus Christ!

## Missing Ingredient

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church is not Christ’s church at all but rather represents the apostasy of which the scriptures warn. The devil has taken over and is inspiring his servants to snare unsuspecting souls. We are seeing another manifestation of what Jesus denounced the Pharisees for in Matt. 23:15 — “You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.”

In spite of all this I am very thankful that there is a true remnant. Christ’s work has never failed, is not failing, nor will it ever fail. In Matt. 16:18 he said to Peter (and the other disciples), “on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” I want to be part of that and I believe that many who read this do also.

### What is It?

So what is this missing ingredient? No doubt many will immediately say, “prayer,” and I wouldn’t disagree with them. It is prayer that connects us with God, with His wisdom, with His enabling power. It is a vital ingredient in every aspect of God’s kingdom.

But I have something else in mind. As critical as prayer is, it is a means to an end. It opens up channels of divine power to accomplish God’s work. But *how* does He work? Simply put, when God works, He speaks. The missing ingredient I have in mind is the effective ministry of God’s Word.

I can just hear someone say, “Oh, is that all! Well, every time I preach I minister faithfully from the Bible so everything is OK.” Is it?

I have a friend who likes to say that the Bible is one book that is no good without the author. He’s right. The Bible is absolutely the word of God — that is, it is the *written* word. It is God’s gift to us and no true ministry of the word will ever depart from it. But is the Bible sufficient? Is life, transforming power, to be found merely in its pages? or do we need the active involvement of the author?

It is at this point that Satan has to a great degree succeeded in undermining the effectiveness of ministry, even among those who sincerely seek to adhere to the Bible. The ministry of the Word has become equated

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in the minds of many with simply studying the Bible and then relaying its words to their hearers. Unfortunately most of that sort of ministry can be — and often is — done with purely human energy and ability.

And praying, “God bless my sermon” won’t help. God isn’t in the business of blessing *your* sermon — or mine. God knows what He wants to say, and how, and when. Unless we are merely vessels through which He does that *it is not the ministry of God’s word*.

### Let There Be Light

Here is a simple illustration that may seem almost silly. Gen. 1:3 accurately records one of the key events of creation. We read, “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” Very simple. God spoke and something happened as a direct result. Gen. 1:3 is the *record* of that event and is, in that sense, the Word of God.

But I challenge any minister of the Word to read those words out loud — even though they are the word of God — and *produce light!* Obviously the power to produce light is not in the words themselves but in the fact that at a particular time and place and for a specific purpose they were uttered by God himself. He alone is the source of the power that actually accomplishes something.

Isaiah 55:10-11 contains these familiar words: “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

Note that it is the word that **goes out from God’s mouth** that accomplishes what He desires. That describes an active process that happens in real time. God will always honor his written word but we need more than that. We need what comes from his mouth — in the present tense.

What comes from his mouth will breathe fresh life into the written word and apply it effectively to present needs. Anything short of that is nothing but dead words. But where God is present, anointing the ministry of the word, there is life.

I’m glad for everything He has spoken in the past, but we need him to speak in the here and now. Nothing less will accomplish

his purpose. It may build great institutions called churches but nothing eternal will happen.

I can’t tell you how many biblically accurate, sincerely and even eloquently delivered sermons I’ve heard in my lifetime that were, to put it gently, **totally dead**. There was no life in the words. They may have entertained mind and emotions but they had no spiritual power or life. What good is that? Sadly, some of these dead sermons were delivered by famous men widely regarded as great preachers. They exhibited a lot of natural ability and sincerity but their words had no life-changing power.

And there are all kinds of natural attempts to make such sermons appear to have life. But speaking loudly, stamping one’s foot, pounding the pulpit, telling emotionally-charged stories and the like don’t impart life to that which is dead. Making a corpse dance like a puppet doesn’t make it alive!

### The Perfect Example

Our Lord is the perfect example of what we are talking about. When he spoke, his words were full of life and power and he didn’t even have to raise his voice.

In the first place he didn’t come merely to *speak* the word of God; he *was* the word of God. That alone reminds us that the word is much more than mere information. It is life itself — God’s life.

John 1:4 says, “In him was life, and that life was the light of men.” The human race was in a state of total darkness (Isaiah 60:2) and no amount of information was going to change that. They needed an encounter with God. It is true that most who encountered him in Jesus turned away from the light of his life but some did open their hearts. As Jesus said in John 12:46, “I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”

One of the most significant facts regarding the earthly ministry of Jesus concerns his humanity. He had been with the Father in glory before the world began (John 17:5). It was through his lips that the words, “Let there be light” were uttered (John 1:3, Heb. 1:1-2, Col. 1:16). All of heaven’s angels worship him (Heb. 1:6).

### In One Word

Yet in his earthly sojourn he lived as a man, experiencing all of man’s weakness and need — thankfully, without sin! In his prayer in John 17:5 he asked that the glory he had once had would be restored to him once again. A key word that describes his earthly life is simply this: **dependence**.

He clearly understood his place in the divine plan. When it came to eternal things he knew that in himself he was utterly powerless to accomplish anything. He was totally dependent upon his Father.

One scripture that clearly reveals this is John 5:19-20 where Jesus said to some questioners, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.”

Note that this was not a matter of mere *choice* but one of *ability*. Jesus did not simply *choose* to do nothing by himself; he was not able! This reveals something of the depth of his submission in coming to earth to accomplish his Father’s will. John 6:38. It is one thing to come as a divine being using his own abilities to carry out a mission. It is another to be emptied of all that and live in humble dependence upon another.

Surely, out of all the people who have ever lived, Jesus had the intelligence, the compassion, everything we imagine that it takes in order to study, understand the scriptures, and use them to minister to the people. **But he didn’t do that.** Never once did Jesus construct a biblical sermon and ask his Father to bless it to his hearers. Think about that! Then think about it some more. Never!

But *what* did Jesus preach? In John 7 some were questioning how he could know so much without having been to school — *their* school, of course! In verses 16-18 we read, “Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.’”

In one simple expression he pointed to God as the source of his message, took the place of a mere messenger, challenged them as to how to know it was from God, and noted the difference between one who speaks “on his own” and one who “works for the honor of the one who sent him.” Is it any wonder that “the crowds were amazed at his teaching because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law”? Matt. 7:28-29.

Remember that these teachers of the law were great students of the scriptures. Yet to them Jesus said in John 5:39-40, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal

life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” The scriptures are indeed God-breathed yet they are only a means to an end. That end is a genuine encounter with Him, the very source of eternal life.

### A Challenge

I have often been challenged by the words of Jesus in John 12:49-50. Looking back at his ministry he said, “For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

“*What to say and how to say it.*” Think about that! How many sermons does that describe? Is it really supposed to be different for us? See also John 8:28-30.

But the ministry of the Word goes beyond the mere relaying of information as we have said, far beyond. In John 6:63 Jesus said, “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.” Clearly Jesus’ words were more than simple information, more than merely passing on a message from God. His words were “spirit” and “life.”

Certainly truth was expressed but the words conveyed much more than just doctrinal truth. The words were a vehicle that transmitted the very spirit and life of the one that sent him. The very God of the universe *inhabited those words*. Words that have no divine spirit in them are just words. How pointless! How can mere words transmitted by men accomplish anything eternal, no matter how accurate they may be?

Notice that Jesus said, “the flesh counts for nothing.” That is profound. Jesus was talking about his own flesh, his own humanity and said that it counted for nothing. The value of his words lay not in his humanity but in the divine spirit and life they contained.

What do our words contain? Do we truly understand that OUR flesh counts for nothing, that nothing — nothing — of our own human ability adds anything to God’s word? To the degree that we rely on being “smart” or “clever” or “eloquent” in any human way, any word we speak becomes empty and useless. We only get in the way. Jesus understood that and steadfastly occupied a place of complete and utter dependence upon his Father. What a picture of the humility that is needed!

### Even Clearer

The picture of Jesus’ earthly ministry becomes even clearer in John 14. There

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Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father of whom he had so often spoken. In verses 9-10 we read, "Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.'"

"It is the Father living in me, who is doing his work." Let those words sink in. Jesus did not merely pass on the Father's message. It was the Father Himself, literally living in Jesus, who gave out the message. Jesus understood his place. He consciously yielded his earthly vessel on all occasions so that his Father, living *within* him, could act *through* him.

It was not Jesus' humanity rising to the occasion to speak God's words; it was Jesus' humanity totally yielded as a vessel for God to speak through. The only thing the humanity added to the process was that yielded vessel.

### The Continuing Ministry of Christ

But of course Jesus' ministry didn't end when he ascended to heaven after the resurrection. In Eph. 4:10 Paul wrote these profound words concerning Christ: "He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe."

Think about that last part, "in order to fill the whole universe." God's plan went far beyond simply living in his Son. Now the Son was able, through the Spirit, to live in and fill his body, the church, and ultimately the whole of the new creation. Think of what is coming, a whole creation pulsating with the very life of God!

Looking forward to the birth of the Church at Pentecost, Jesus said in John 14:20, "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you." The plan of God as it relates to this present age is simply an extension of the earthly ministry of Christ. Whereas that was the Father in Christ doing his work, today it is to be Christ in the body doing his work.

Remember that Jesus said, "I will build my church." Nowhere does he tell us to build him a church! That is Christ's job, one for which he is perfectly equipped. We are but flesh. How can mere flesh produce spiritual, eternal results? It cannot. But

Christ IN US and working THROUGH US can do the job that needs to be done. We are no more able to do the work of God in ourselves than was Jesus.

### Each of Us

The ability that is needed comes from heaven, given by the Christ who reigns there, given according to HIS will alone. That is why Paul says in Eph. 4:7, "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." See also 1 Cor. 12:11. No one chooses their place in God's kingdom.

It is in this context, Eph. 4, that Paul speaks of what some have called "foundational ministries." These include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. These are not so much gifts of ministries to men but rather gifts to the church of men, divinely enabled vessels through whom Christ himself establishes and builds up the church.

And these ministry gifts are not ends in themselves but are meant to equip the entire body so that all the members may function in their God-ordained places, sharing the life received from above with the whole body that it might grow to maturity. Eph. 4:11-16.

Verse 16 sums it up: "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." "From him." Significant words, those. Every resource for seeing Christ's work advanced *must* come from him.

Is this not what Jesus said before he ascended? In Luke 24:46-49 we read, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

### Not a Sermon

And what a demonstration of that power there was at Pentecost. I have often heard what Peter preached referred to as a "sermon" but that was no sermon: it was a message from heaven. Everything — both the words AND the power those words conveyed — came from heaven. Peter didn't need to shout beyond what it took to be heard. He merely yielded himself to the Spirit and Christ began the promised work of building his church by convicting and saving thousands.

Men who had so recently been cowards

when Jesus was arrested and crucified were suddenly transformed into channels of divine power. Their words penetrated hearts and consciences, not because of any human ability, but because they abandoned themselves to the heavenly ministry of Christ. They were not zealous volunteers but heavenly conscripts, called, chosen, and equipped for a heavenly work.

I am very aware that the outward manifestations of true ministry are not always the same. There are times and seasons in Christ's work. There are seasons of planting, seasons of watering, and seasons of harvest. Ministries themselves vary. But the principles are always the same. It is always a supernatural work.

It is a great temptation in ministry to seek for "results" that men can see and measure things by that. In so doing many resort to the wisdom and energy of men. They are after a "show in the flesh." They seek the approval of men. May God help us.

### Ordinary Men

And so the apostles continued to minister, depending entirely upon the power they had received from the risen Christ. They were not chosen because they were men of superior natural ability. Just the opposite! The religious council in Jerusalem noted in Acts 4:13 that they were "unschooled, ordinary men" and were "astonished."

As Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 1:27-29, "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him."

Does that offend your pride? Good! Our pride needs more than mere offending: it needs to be put to death. Only what comes from Christ can accomplish the *work of Christ*.

### Paul

No doubt one of the most significant events in the life of the young Church was the calling of Saul, the Pharisee, and his transformation into Paul, the apostle. Paul referred to his conversion in these words: "Christ Jesus took hold of me." Phil. 3:12. On his way to arrest Christians he himself was arrested!

In convincing Ananias to go and pray for Saul after his Damascus road encounter with Jesus, the Lord said in Acts 9:15, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel."

Few have a divine calling that is so dramatic BUT every minister of the gospel MUST be called. God does not use volunteers.

Taught of God as he was, Paul was keenly aware of the character of true ministry. After speaking of his confidence in ministry he said in 2 Cor. 3:5-6, "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

He understood, as Jesus did, that his ability came entirely from God AND that he was not called merely to minister accurate words but to minister the Spirit because only the Spirit imparts life.

It is a frightening thought — at least it should be — that ministering truth that does NOT also minister the Spirit *actually ministers death*. That is because it, like the Old Testament law, demands things of us that we are powerless in ourselves to do. True ministry not only imparts words of truth but also the Spirit that alone empowers the hearer to walk in that truth.

### The Power of God

The gospel itself is as much about power as it is about truth. Consider Paul's familiar words in Rom. 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." To Paul, the gospel was not merely a matter of convincing people of the truthfulness of a message, but the means of a life-changing encounter with the God behind the message.

1 Thess. 1:4-5 says, "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction."

In 1 Thess. 2:13 Paul wrote, "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe." Note that the "word of God" is something that is "at work" in those who believe.

Of his ministry Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 10:3-5, "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of

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God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." Sounds like a supernatural thing to me!

### The New Birth

James adds his testimony in James 1:18 — "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."

And Peter in 1 Peter 1:23-25 — "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, 'All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.' And this is the word that was preached to you."

Did not Jesus compare the word to seed? In Luke 8:5-8 we find the parable of the sower who sowed on different types of soil with very different results. Only one soil produced a crop. In verse 11 we are told specifically that "The seed is the word of God." The good soil typifies "those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop." Verse 15.

A seed has an outward part that dies and an inward part that is alive and capable of reproducing that life. Two seeds may appear to be the same on the outside yet one may be alive while the other has no life on the inside. I fear that much of today's preaching, even among those who seek to be faithful to the scriptures, falls into the latter category. What good would it do for someone to hear and retain a word if it had no life in it? Think what is at stake.

### Jars of Clay

The fact that a seed has an outward part that dies also typifies something else. It is the same thing that Jesus understood so well when he said, "the flesh counts for nothing." John 6:63. Paul put it this way in 2 Cor. 4:7 — "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."

Paul's own particular "jar of clay" was his humanity with all of its weaknesses and limitations. After listing just some of the ways that God used in order to deal with those limitations he says in 2 Cor. 4:11-12, "For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you."

I am afraid that this is a truth little under-

stood and much resisted. By nature we seek to be strong and able — and proud of it. But nothing hinders the ministry of God's word more than flesh. There is nothing more incompatible with the word of God than the exercise and display of human ability. It matters not how scriptural the words that exit our mouths may be: they are powerless to help anyone. They may win the praise of men but what good will that be on the day of judgment?

### The Sentence of Death

God is faithful to continually carry out the sentence of death in one form or another for every one of his true servants. In 2 Cor. 1:9 Paul refers to a particularly difficult experience in these words: "Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead." Of course, this principle applies to every believer, not just to those thought of as "ministers."

God didn't do such things in the life of Paul without reason. He understands us completely. He knows how relentless the flesh is in wanting its way. The oft-referred-to passage in 2 Cor. 12 illustrates this. Paul had received great supernatural revelations. Any man would tend to become proud who experiences such things. So God allowed Paul to be harassed by a demon!

The ongoing battle helped to keep Paul in a place of need and of dependence upon God. For a while he didn't understand why this was happening. Finally God explained it to him. In verse 9 the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Paul's attitude toward such things was completely reversed. He had seen them as curses, hindrances to ministry. Now he saw them as sources of "delight"! Why? Because he was more interested in God's power resting on him than in personal comfort. He understood afresh that whatever caused him to feel his weakness and his need to cry out to God for help was the very means of being able to minister effectively.

Do we understand this? Do we view our natural abilities as assets or liabilities in God's work? Who are we trusting in? Whose glory are we seeking? Are we willing to carry our cross daily, allowing it to administer death to our natural man that others may experience God's life? Or do we dig in our heels and fight against him?

### Alive and Powerful

A scripture that often comes to me when thinking about the word of God is found

in Heb. 4:12-13 — "For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable." NLT. Can anything less rightly be called the word of God?

The Book of Hebrews begins with these words in 1-3: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."

As we pointed out earlier, when God does something, he speaks. And when he speaks it is through his Son. It is also clear that in this present age, Christ speaks through called and chosen men who not only convey his thoughts but also the very life of God.

### Ministry Hindered

No one understands this better than Satan. He knows all too well the power of God's living word to save and transform lost helpless sinners, delivering them from the power of darkness. Col. 1:13. And so Satan, in keeping with his wicked corrupted nature, seeks by every possible means to undermine and hinder the word of God.

Paul gave Timothy this instruction in 2 Tim. 4:2-4 — "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."

So one method Satan employs is to cultivate in men a taste for a corrupted gospel that caters to their natural desires. This fact combined with the pressure ministers feel to achieve "success" in ministry accounts for much that we see in the current religious scene. All connection with the head of the church has been severed. At best men operate in their own natural ability and the message itself has been compromised.

Beware of itching ears. Even God's true servants can be strongly tempted to subtly

compromise their calling and message. It is a subject for another time but the whole religious system current today plays right into Satan's hands: the hiring and firing of professional preachers; strong sectarian doctrinal systems and organizations; going into debt for expensive buildings and the like, creating financial pressures; the pressure for numbers and growth; and similar factors.

It is easy to "soften" the message a little for fear of losing members, offending the business man upon whose contributions the budget depends, offending key members of the board who can easily cause a minister to be fired.

### One Master

True ministers of God's word have only one master and he is in heaven. Whether in or out of the "system" Christ is the only one we need to be concerned about pleasing. There will always be a cost in following him in this world but it is far better to hear him one day say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," than to be a compromising men-pleaser who accomplishes little or nothing of any eternal value.

Of course, Satan does many other things in his desire to separate ministers from the only source of real life and power. Some are very obvious as prideful men exalt their own intellects above the scriptures and begin to re-interpret it to conform to modern thought and taste. "Modernism" in many forms has been with us for a long time and clearly serves Satan's interests alone.

### Merely Human

However, there are other ways Satan undermines the ministry of the word that affect even those who still have a strong view of the inspiration of scripture. Every one of these shares this characteristic: the living connection between ministry and Christ is severed and the whole process is brought into the merely human realm in one way or another.

We have already discussed the difference between the word that proceeds from God's mouth, accomplishing something, and the scriptures. If this difference is not understood then the ministry of the word can be easily reduced to expounding, or at least preaching from, the scriptures. Now, true living ministry will also do that BUT preaching from the Bible can also be done apart from any anointing, apart from any active involvement of the author.

I mentioned earlier the many examples I have observed in this regard, sermons that were scriptural and sincere, but without life,

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without any evidence that Christ was actively involved! At best they imparted information, and sometimes entertained as well.

This kind of “ministry” doesn’t require a divine calling at all! Zealous, gifted men can do it — and they do. There is an old expression that describes what often happens: “Momma-called, papa-sent, and seminary-trained.” I went to Bible college. I’ve seen it happen.

And so men, apart from a divine call, stand before the people giving religious speeches that are essentially second-hand truth, filtered through a particular sectarian tradition, and if they are good enough at it they are considered successful ministers!

But even the true minister of Christ can fall into the trap of preaching something that is merely a product of study instead of a fresh living message anointed by Christ. And he may even pride himself on being “sound in the faith” and faithful to the scriptures. Well, technically, that may even be true but so what? Dead is dead!

And if it is just a human process of coming up with a sermon every week, that can create its own pressures. What to preach? Some even run to the internet on Saturday evening to come up with something to preach on Sunday morning — and don’t apparently see anything wrong in that! Or, they trade sermon outlines with other ministers who are likewise trying to come up with fresh sermons. Or they get them from books, etc., etc.

### Study?

I can just hear someone say, “But doesn’t 2 Timothy 2:15 tell us to ‘Study to shew thyself approved unto God . . .’? Yes, it does, in the archaic language of the King James Version. Virtually every modern translation renders the thought correctly as “Do your best” or “Be diligent” or “Make every effort” or something similar.

That scripture has nothing to do with “study” as the word is used today, that is, reading and gaining an understanding of scripture through intellectual effort. That kind of study can be done apart from Christ but a true minister **MUST** get his message from Christ — in the present. It may well come as we read and meditate on the scriptures but there is monumental difference between the product of mere study and a word that is “quickenened.”

A word that is “quickenened” means a word that is made alive. The Spirit of God suddenly shines a light upon a thought or

scripture and it “comes alive.” Most believers have at one time or another experienced reading a scripture that they may have read many times before and having it suddenly “leap off the page” and come alive. It often gives comfort or understanding or faith relating to a current need.

Any true minister of the word needs to be tuned in to whatever Christ, the head of the church, desires to say on a particular occasion to a particular people. Every personal agenda, every plan, every program, needs to be laid at Christ’s feet in surrender. He alone has the right to speak to his people. He alone speaks words that, though they may flow through human lips, have the power to impart life.

Read the Bible, pray, get others to pray — absolutely. But in every situation we need to have our ears tuned to hear his voice, to discern that quickened word. And then let him guide your thoughts as he will and depend wholly upon him in ministering to the people. It is a supernatural process from beginning to end. Nothing else will do the job.

### Manna

The manna in the wilderness is a good type in this regard. God fed his people supernaturally with bread from heaven every morning (except the Sabbath). They were to gather enough for the one day and not attempt to store it. Those who did found it wormy and useless.

We are specifically told in Deut. 8:3 that he did this “to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” They were to live in complete dependence on the faithfulness of God, trusting him for their provision — daily.

Do we not need the same lesson today? Do we not also need “every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord,” fresh from heaven, on every occasion? or are “canned manna,” “sacred traditions,” or humanly constructed sermons enough?

I’m glad that the Lord understands our limitations, our degree of maturity, and patiently teaches those who look to him and desire to learn. He is not looking for perfection. Even Paul said in 1 Cor. 13:9, “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part . . .” If that was true of Paul how much more so the rest of us. But the Lord will honor those who truly desire to please and serve him alone in these matters.

### Another Pitfall

One pitfall that comes to mind that Satan is behind is the false burden. We see a need

and begin to focus on it and think about it. The burden grows heavier and heavier and we think it surely *must* be from the Lord. After all, we want to serve him and help God’s people.

In our desire to “do something” we begin to think of scriptures that seem to bear on the need and both the burden and the desire to press those scriptures upon the needy grow. And in the energy of that, we share the burden publicly, striving with sincere emotion to impress the hearers with the thoughts that have been going round and round in our heads. And it has no life! What’s wrong?

Well, it wasn’t the Lord’s burden to begin with! Satan often tries to focus our attention on some need (real or imagined) and then tries to get us to “do something” about it. It all seems so right. **BUT** the impulse hasn’t come from heaven at all. This kind of thing particularly affects those most zealous and sincere.

We need the Lord’s help to discern the difference between this kind of “burden” and the real thing. For one thing Jesus said, “... my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” A “religious” burden is heavy indeed.

Along with the desire to serve the Lord and to see his kingdom advance we need the realization that his work is sure and that he is patiently planting and harvesting in HIS time and way. One simple word from heaven will accomplish more than 1000 impassioned sermons delivered in the energy of the flesh, no matter how technically true they may be.

I have both observed and, unfortunately, experienced this firsthand. I remember one occasion many years ago when it fell my lot to speak to a church gathering. As the time approached I felt this kind of heavy burden that I couldn’t shake. It seemed as if everything depended upon the word that weighed so heavily upon me. I questioned it but finally just went with it. I poured out my heart and I’m sure my demeanor reflected the anxiousness of my “burden.” It was almost as if, “My God, if they don’t get this all will be lost.”

Unfortunately it was just me and was totally dead. **AND** irony of ironies, the subject concerned the necessity of having the anointing in ministry! It was a good and humbling lesson and I’m still learning these many years later.

### Magic Words

Another trick the enemy uses is to take advantage of our natural desire to be in control. We don’t naturally like moment-by-moment dependence. The trick works

like this: we experience God’s blessing in connection with a message or a particular saying or a particular activity. People are touched and it is evident that God is there and at work. Or, we encounter words and actions that have seemingly been blessed in the ministry of others.

And so we conclude (falsely) that if we say or do those things then God’s blessing will follow. We associate God’s blessing with the words or actions as though we have discovered a secret, a formula, for experiencing God at work.

Not so. That would turn God’s work into a form of “magic” — with us in control! Just say or do the right thing. After all, we SAW God bless it. It becomes a formula we rely on. How easily do we forget the principle of manna: it must be fresh on every occasion. God didn’t bless because we somehow said the magic words but because we spoke his message for the occasion.

THAT’s what we need. We may even be led to preach on a subject or a scripture we have preached on before — but it will fresh, with life and an emphasis that suits what the Lord desires for that occasion.

And how easy it is to come up with a collection of sayings that God may have blessed at one time or another — and we assume that we can say them as we will and God will bless. If we aren’t careful it turns into a kind of “religious patter” that may sound spiritual but is totally devoid of life. “Ministry” becomes saying “the right words” and doing “the right things” and expecting that divine blessing will automatically follow.

It doesn’t work that way. The moment we take hold of anything — even something we have seen God bless — and try to repeat it in the flesh we break that critical connection that alone brings divine blessing. How easy is it for something God once blessed to become an empty religious form — and the sad thing is that those most affected often don’t realize it.

### Branches

There is no substitute for a constant connection with heaven. We can no more minister out of a storehouse of sermons and sayings than could Jesus in the days of his earthly ministry. The words of Jesus in John 15 about the vine and the branches should make this truth abundantly clear. The only way a branch can bear fruit is by a continual living connection with the vine. And fruit is more than a product of information: it is a product of the life force that flows from the vine.

People need God’s life to be born again

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(James 1:18). They need that life in order to grow spiritually (1 Peter 2:2, Eph. 4:11-16). Scriptural truth is important, but merely indoctrinating people in scriptural truth accomplishes nothing unless God's life and power flow through that truth.

Of course there are those who recognize that dead truth is useless and place great emphasis upon "power." Unfortunately it is all too easy to jump from the one ditch into the other and emphasize power that leaves truth behind. Seeing and feeling something, producing visible manifestations of "power" become the objective of what is called ministry.

### A Balance

There is always a balance in true ministry between truth and spirit or truth and power (John 4:24). An unbalanced emphasis on one or the other opens a door of opportunity for Satan to lead astray and to undermine what Christ seeks to accomplish.

There are times when a patient ministry of living truth sows good seed deep in hearts, yet without a great outward show. We see the words of Jesus from Mark 4:26-29 fulfilled where he said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain — first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

The work of ministering the word of God calls to mind the picture painted in James 5:7 of the farmer who patiently plants and waits for the rain and the harvest. That is God's business. As we said earlier, there are seasons of planting and harvesting. By nature we love the "harvest" because it is something we can see but there is no harvest without that patient planting.

I have heard many accounts over the years of faithful and difficult pioneer missionary efforts that seemed to produce little result despite years of prayer and sacrifice. Yet, sometimes a generation or two later, all of a sudden there came a great harvest. Does that mean that the laborers in the time of harvest were more spiritual than the earlier workers? Of course not!

Think of the words of Jesus in John 4:36-38 — "Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal

life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

### True Ministry

The ministry of the word means abandoning every personal agenda, seeking only God's purpose and plan. It means being willing to faithfully sow a living seed in prepared hearts even in obscurity if need be, trusting God for the harvest in his time. (Jesus was even willing to give out God's word to many he knew would never receive it.) It means a willingness to allow God to administer death to our old nature that his life might flow out of us instead.

It means a prayerful relationship with God that recognizes our utter dependence upon him both to know *what* to minister and *how* and *when* and *where*. It means actively trusting God for the anointing to give out what He has given us, remaining sensitive to his leading throughout (not slavishly following a pre-determined outline). It means being willing no matter what to seek to please God rather than men, even when men are particularly displeased. Sometimes it means standing alone, not in a rebellious or independent prideful spirit but in humble faithfulness to Christ.

It means being a servant both to the Lord who has called us and to the people to whom we are sent. We are not our own and have no right to seek our own glory in any form. It means a continual awareness that we can do none of these things without his help and that as long as we are in the flesh there is room to learn and grow in grace.

Remember, when God acts, He speaks. His word is living and powerful. It is the force that brought forth the entire first creation. And it is the force that is even now bringing forth the new creation, the one that will never be corrupted by sin!

Christ will finish the work the Father gave him. Hell itself cannot stop him. At present the work of bringing forth this new creation involves us. When he is through "bringing many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:10) then, and only then, will the rest of that creation be brought forth. Rev. 21:1-5.

How is Christ preparing us? Eph. 5:25-27 says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

How? "Through the word." No wonder Satan is so relentless in opposing and undermining the ministry of God's word. It is the very power that rescues victims from his clutches and seals his defeat.

What is our part? 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."

Do we dare to be satisfied with anything less?

Please pray "...for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel..." Ephesians 6:19.

## Lost and Found

By Lawrence Peter Medici

*While traveling within my mind,  
I stopped to see what I could find,  
In a place called "Lost and Found,"  
Where lives lay scattered all around.*

*Just as I entered through the gate,  
I saw the Section labeled "Hate,"  
Where people who are sad and lost,  
Pay in fear the highest cost.*

*And down the road, to my dismay,  
I saw the games that people play,  
No longer needed by those few,  
Who know what greed and lies can do.*

*Then to the right, I saw the sign:  
"BROKEN HEARTS," and I saw mine,  
But on it was a tag marked  
"CLAIMED!"*

*And Jesus was the buyer named.*

*I picked my heart up off the ground,  
And heard it sing the sweetest sound,  
So folks could hear from miles around,  
"I once was Lost, but now I'm Found!"*

## COMING EVENTS

**June Convention**

June 25-28, 2014

Southern Pines, North Carolina

**November Meeting**

November 26-29, 2014

Lexington, South Carolina

# 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
WNVY	1090 AM	Pensacola, FL	7:00 AM
KWDF	840 AM	Alexandria, LA	1:00 PM
WKDI	840 AM	Denton, MD	9:15 AM
WNQM	1300 AM	Nashville, TN	10:00 AM
WWVA	1170 AM	Wheeling, WV	9:30 PM

## Short Wave

**WHRI ANGEL 1 – (Central & South America)**

Mon.-Fri.: 0700 UTC-7.315 MHZ

Mon.-Fri.: 1600 UTC-21.630 MHZ

Mon.-Fri.: 2300 UTC-7.315 MHZ

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

Tues.-Sat.: 0015 UTC-5.920 MHZ

Mon.-Fri.: 0800 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 <http://www.whr.org/Program-Schedules.cfm>, scroll down to "Detailed Schedule Search," enter Midnight Cry for the program title and then click "Start Search."

## Television Broadcast

— (30 Minutes Weekly) —

**The NRB Network (DirecTV 378)**

Sun.-6:30 AM Eastern

Mon. 3:30 AM Eastern

### Local Broadcasts

**JAX, FL - WJXT - Ch. 4 HD - Sun. 5:30 AM**

**Boone, NC - MTN-TV - TV 24**

Cable 18 - Sat. 8:00 PM

**Salt Lake City, UT - KTMW TV-20**

Thurs. 7:00 PM & Sat. 10:00 PM

**Nampa, ID (Greater Boise area) - KCLP-18**

Tues. 8:30 PM

**Chicago, IL - WJYS TV-62**

Sun. 7:00 AM

**Greenville, SC - WGGG TV-16**

Sun. 7:00 PM

## Website

<http://www.midnightcry.org>

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