Midnight Cry Messenger

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

Volume LXV: Number 1

A Quarterly Publication Of Midnight Cry Ministries, Southern Pines, NC JANUARY-FEBRUARY-MARCH 2020

SEEDS OF THE KINGDOM

by Phil Enlow

Adapted from a message preached at the Bible Tabernacle in September, 2018.

We've been focusing, for some time now, on the Kingdom of God, seeking to do some teaching, and I believe the Lord continues to quicken truth. And so, today, let's step back for a minute and take a look at the big picture, the larger context in which we are thinking about all of this.

We know that the Word of God exists between two ends, a beginning and an ending. And the beginning of everything is really *before* the beginning, because it's something that God had in His heart before the beginning of time, before the beginning of creation. It was to have a Kingdom that was filled with Himself, filled with His life, and to have a family of sons and daughters who would share that with Him, because His nature is to love, and love desires an object. And so, back before the beginning of time that was His heart, His purpose.

And, of course, when we look at the end, that's what we see, don't we? We see a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth, and we see inhabitants there. We see God dwelling among men. We see our Savior, literally walking with us as a Brother. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine standing there together worshiping the Father, and there is no sin, no death, no sorrow, none of the bad things that we experience here?

On the one hand, we see the purpose, and on the other, the fulfillment. And so, we've been talking about how God carries out that purpose. We know that an enemy stepped in and led a rebellion against God and against His Kingdom, but we also know that God is absolutely in control, regardless of what He allows that enemy to do. It only serves His purpose in the end. And there will come a time when that will not exist. Thank God!

I've heard people over the years speak of God's purpose, as though God were going to restore Eden, and they're referring to the Garden of Eden where everything was pure and unspoiled. But I don't believe that's quite accurate. I believe God is going way beyond Eden. When God created everything, He said that it was all very good, right? So, there was no evil in it. There was no death in it. But it was not His ultimate purpose because there was still a choice that Adam and Eve had to make.

God is not a robot, is He? We don't have a Great Computer in the sky running everything. We were created in His image, were we not? It wouldn't make any sense for God to say we are created in His image and then make us like robots, or chess pieces on a board to be moved about at His will. There's an extreme that some people go to that so emphasizes the sovereignty of God that it effectively takes away our choice and responsi-

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Midnight Cry Messenger P.O. Box 685 Southern Pines, NC 28388-0685 bility. He is, indeed, sovereign, yet we are responsible.

The reality is, when God created everything, He put it all in the hands of man, didn't He? But there was a choice. There were two trees. And in the beginning, they hadn't partaken of either one. There was a choice, and they made the wrong choice. They chose the way of rebellious, self-seeking independence through the knowledge of good and evil. And so, God has been working within the context of a world, a creation, that has been totally taken over by that spirit, by that life form, if you will.

There were two different life forms represented by those trees. One was God's life. That's a life that is pure and can't die. But the other one is corrupt and ultimately dies. It causes people to live for self, to put self and selfish desires at the center, and all that does is to create the world that we see, a world where evil, sorrow, struggle, and death reign.

In the unfolding of God's purpose, creation was only the beginning, wasn't it? Even though the creation was good, it was also innocent. It had not moved beyond that point. And so, a wrong choice was made, and it has brought about all the evil that we see.

There's an interesting scripture in Romans 11 that comes to me from

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Christians In The Night

- UPDATED -By Phil Enlow

We live in a unique hour in the world's history. Though in one sense there is nothing new under the sun, yet in another sense the manifestation of forces which have always been present is such that this is an hour like no other the world has seen.

History is moving inexorably toward the day when, "There will be no more delay." Rev. 10:6. It won't be long before the Almighty will bring down the curtain upon this age and mankind will stand before the Lord in judgment.

Satan, though he knows not the precise time, is very aware that his time is short. Rev. 12:12 speaks of a time when the devil, "is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short." Obviously from this scripture we see that the devil is able to know that the end is drawing near and that this knowledge causes him to redouble his efforts to destroy men and oppose the work of God in the earth.

No doubt this knowledge comes in large part through the church. Paul says in Ephesians 3:10 that the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms through the Church. When the present tense expression of the mind and purpose of God comes forth in the earth by the anointing, Satan is a very attentive listener. He probably listens to the word of God more closely than most Christians.

It is no accident that there is a great increase in satanic activity in our day. God has spoken many times to his people to warn them of the lateness of the hour. Satan is fully aware of this. It should be no surprise that he is mounting a last all-out offensive in his work of evil. An all-powerful God is permitting him to deceive those who refuse to love the truth and so be saved. 2 Thess. 2:10.

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

Editor: Phil Enlow

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

Editor's Letter

Dear Saints,

Greetings once again in the wonderful name of Jesus! First, our apologies for not getting out an issue for October-December. It just seemed like nothing came together and it was a busy time

We did enjoy one special blessing during that time as our dear Bro. Kumar from India came for a visit. He had been trying to get a visa for years and it was finally granted. He had the opportunity to visit all four assemblies and we enjoyed our time with him. Some of us had visited him and his people a number of times but he had never been able to visit us.

The lead article this time is once again adapted from a message preached awhile ago. It explores a rich and simple truth found throughout the scriptures. God is revealed as the great Divine Gardener, planting a crop in this temporary corrupted creation that will ripen and be ready to step into a pure, incorruptible, eternal creation that He has prepared for us. We are that crop.

Our Lord Jesus is Himself the first seed of that new creation. His earthly body represented the outer part of that seed that had to die to release the inner life that would spring forth with new creation life. In embracing death, He also embraced the life that is truly life, and ever since has been reproducing that life in those who hear and surrender to the gospel.

Thus do we in turn become "seeds," possessing eternal life in temporal bodies. We too are called to "die daily" that true life will be expressed despite the opposition of our bodies and the spiritual condition of the world around us. The harvest is the end of the age, and it is coming! Our hope is sure, not because of who or what we are in ourselves but because of God's purpose perfectly carried out in Christ!

The other article, "Christians in the Night," has been published a number of times over the years but I felt it was time to edit and revise it, to give it a slight update. The message itself is more relevant with each passing day as spiritual "night" deepens on planet earth.

Men and women are making choices every day with eternal consequences and God's people are called to serve Him in spite of conditions around them. There is a separation taking place. Which side are you on?

We continue to experience many blessings as we see the Lord at work in lives. It is not about

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time to time. Often, we have referred to Romans 12 and the wonderful passage about offering our bodies as a living sacrifice. But that chapter begins with the word, "therefore," doesn't it? And whenever we see that word, we need to ask ourselves what it's there for!

The word, "therefore," points back to something previously said. To sum it up, in chapters 1 through 11, Paul lays out the reason why we need a Savior.

First, he says that when men knew God, they refused to worship Him as God. That's Romans 1. A world of men made a deliberate choice to say in effect, "God, leave us alone. We're going to live our own independent lives pursuing whatever desires appeal to us." And so, God turned them over to the evil that they had chosen.

And Paul, as he develops his understanding of the gospel, is dealing with two groups of people, isn't he? One group is the Jews, to whom God had not only revealed Himself but also with whom He had identified Himself in great measure. But he's also dealing with the Gentile world that was living in spiritual darkness.

And Paul clearly establishes early on that there's no difference. People today want to make a difference. There is no difference when it comes to God's ultimate purpose. Everyone has, "... sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23, KJV). That's the long and the short of it

And so, in chapter 11, he's still dealing with the question, "Okay, what about the Jews? Where do they fit in? I don't get it. They've fallen. They've turned away from God. They rejected Jesus when He came, and they instigated His crucifixion. I don't understand."

And God explains to Paul, and he shares the explanation with us in chapters 9 through 11, that He never promised to save all Jews! He *did* promise to save a remnant. There would always be a believing remnant who would be saved. And not only that, the fact that the Gospel has gone out into the Gentile world was going to come back to benefit the Jews because they would hear the Gospel and some of them would

"numbers" or outward excitement but about inward transformation. I would rather have a spirit of peace and unity in the Lord's presence than great crowds and temporary emotions.

Just a note: this year's June convention is scheduled for June 24-27 in Jacksonville, Florida. It is always a time of blessing and fellowship and we always have folks come to be with us. Ask the Lord about it, and come if He leads and gives peace. We'd love to see you!

Whether you are able to come or not we always covet your prayers that we may be enabled to faithfully serve the Lord in such an hour.

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

Your brother in Christ, Phil Enlow be moved to embrace it.

And so, ultimately, God's purpose was to have a people composed of Jews and Gentiles alike, without those earthly distinctions. In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, Paul said, right? See, there's a kingdom where all those distinctions are gone, and it's a remnant of all that come to Him from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

But there's something that God says, beginning in verse 30, of chapter 11, that I would like to note: "Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience ..." — speaking of the Jews — "... so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you." (NIV).

I just happened to notice that I have that word, "now," underlined. There's a reason for that, because this is not about some future thing. This is about the "church age," if you want to call it that, this present age. There are Jews who literally come to Christ and become brothers and sisters with us. In that sense they receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to us.

This is the scripture that attracted my attention: "For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all." That's the place that mankind finds itself. People have no claim upon God through any personal goodness. When men and women choose to humble themselves before God, it's not because there's some goodness in them that isn't in others. It's just the opposite. It is the renunciation of any claim to goodness and an appeal to God for mercy based on His provision and promise through the cross. There is no other ground upon which anyone may stand, Jew or Gentile.

But what it really comes down to is this: there is a choice that everyone must make. And that choice is to come to God, to surrender to Him on the ground of mercy, or to say, "No, I'm going to go my own way." Everyone makes that choice.

It's a humbling thing. It flies in the face of human nature for me to come to God and basically declare spiritual bankruptcy, because when He speaks, it shows me what I really am. Most people harden their hearts and resist that message. But, my walk with Him every day reminds me what I am in myself and how much I need Him, and how I could never hope to come to Him and say, "God, look at me, I deserve Your favor." It is mercy!

Mercy is undeserved favor! Grace is the divine help I need to avail myself of mercy. It's His strength and influence that works in my heart and enables me to say, "Yes, Lord, I surrender. I turn from my own way." When God calls anyone to His kingdom, the power to respond is embedded in that call. That is why we must call upon Him when he is near. Isaiah 55:6.

Folks, that's the choice that every single person in this room must make at some point in life. And it's an eternal choice. There's a

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crossroad that people come to. So that's really the foundation of what we're talking about this morning.

We've been talking about a kingdom and how God over many centuries spoke through the prophets, telling of a kingdom that was to come! Then, we talked about the fact that the kingdom began to manifest itself in the world in the person of Jesus Christ.

Here, we have the One about whom we were singing this morning. He came into a world that He Himself had created. And He was willing to come into the world, not as some conquering hero, riding on a horse, with a mighty army, but as a baby. He humbled Himself to literally become a part of His own creation. What an amazing thing that is, the willingness He showed to go to such lengths to carry out the purpose of God!

But there was one thing about Jesus that was unique in all human history up to that point. God lived in Him. It was one thing for God to be *with* someone, as He was with the prophets, overshadowing them, giving them supernatural strength and revelation. We see very graphic examples of God's being with someone in Samson. Here was an otherwise ordinary-looking man who demonstrated incredible feats of strength. How did he do that? God rested on him and imparted strength to him that he didn't have in himself.

And yet, wonderful as that was, it was not the same thing as God living *inside* them. There was something about Christ that was brand new! Jesus was a full participant, if you will, in this old, corrupted creation, but yet, God lived in Him because He was a sinless, obedient Son, One who lived as a man in this world, yet never sinned. So that was the unique thing about Him: Jesus entered His own creation, yet He had divine life in Him.

John 12 records several things that occurred during crucifixion week. One concerned some people who wanted to see Jesus, but He said in verse 23, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." Of course, we know that Jesus Himself was this "Son of Man." It was how He often referred to Himself.

That's interesting, isn't it? He was about to go to the cross, yet He said He was about to be glorified. You talk about confidence in the purpose of God! You talk about Someone who was able to look past death! Folks, we need to be able to look past whatever God allows in this life that puts us to death, knowing it leads to life!

Look at the example of the One who went before us, who considered all that He had to do as if it were nothing. He was able to overlook it because He had His eye on what was ahead. Thank God! And what was ahead was us! He was looking ahead to the time when He would be able to share with us that life that was in Him! That's here, now, this morning! This is relevant to you and to me today!

But listen to what He says: "I tell you the

truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world ..." – that's what He's talking about – "... will keep it for eternal life." It's a pretty radical choice, isn't it? "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."

What an interesting picture Jesus paints of what He was about to undergo! He compares Himself with a seed. A seed has two parts, doesn't it? It has an outer part, but the purpose of the outer part is to contain something on the inside. There is life in there, if it is a good seed. But you never get that life out of the seed until it is put into the ground and the outer part literally dies! It is given over to death so the inner life can come forth.

Do you see what God's purpose is and how that plan is to work out? God is a great Gardener. You see this in many places in the Bible, where God is pictured as literally planting something. This is a theme. God's purpose was not just to exalt His Son so we could all say, "Wow," and then go to hell. God's purpose was to share the life that was in Jesus with many others

And so, Jesus laid down His life in such a way that it opened heaven's door. It opened the door to a kingdom that was eternal to people who would otherwise have no hope whatsoever! Everything goes back to what took place on the cross and the resurrection. Praise God! How central that is!

But what a theme there is in the scriptures of divine life, literally planted like a seed in something that is of this earth, this creation. And yet, despite the corruption of this present creation, the power of God's life produces an eternal harvest!

It's not about preserving or enhancing **this** life. It's not **about** this life. It's about God saying, "I'm going to plant My seed in the earth." It's amazing to me. I can't wrap my brain around this, that God would use a corrupted creation as the very medium in which He, as the great Divine Gardener, would produce a crop that lasts forever!

Now you know, as a farmer, you're not putting your seed into the ground for the sake of the ground. You're not going to eat the ground. The ground is simply a medium because you're going to get out of it something that's good.

And that's what God is doing. There's nothing about this creation that will last. But while it's here, God is using it. God's purpose is not just to simply impart His life to somebody and say, "Okay, you've got it. Let's go straight to heaven." There is something that takes place here that is necessary to produce all He has purposed. So, divine life, planted in earth, grows into an eternal harvest. That which is earthly passes away but that which is divine lives forever.

There's something else He says there that is very interesting. I've often referred to it. "Now my soul is troubled..." – Jesus goes on – "...

and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?" Is that what I'm going to say? Is that how I'm going to react to this, in other words? "No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" So, there was an utter surrender, wasn't there?

When God calls on us to surrender, we have a pretty good example of Someone who surrendered His life to the ultimate sacrifice. And He did it for you and for me. He could've called for 10,000 angels to save himself from the cross – there's a song that says that.

"Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.' The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him." So, they didn't quite understand, but they knew something unusual had happened.

"Jesus said, 'This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now..." – this is the key statement – "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." Note, the original Greek does not have the word, "men," but simply says that Jesus would draw "all" to himself. I believe the meaning is deeper than the way most usually apply this scripture.

The picture that I've had of this, for many years now, is that of Jesus, at a pivotal time in the history of the unfolding of God's eternal purpose, representing two different creations! How many understand that? How many of you see that?

He possessed a natural life that resided in a natural body. That body was part of the old creation. But He also possessed the very life of the new creation on the inside. Both were there! And in order for the new creation to come forth, the old one literally had to be laid down, willingly given over to death.

Why? Because He understood! The pathway to true life is death! Does that make a little more sense of the Christian life? It's not about this world! It's about learning to live out the life that we will fully have there in bodies that are still part of this crazy world, a wicked world that hates and opposes everything we stand for.

When Jesus died and was buried, God was literally planting a seed, and when that seed came forth, a new creation was born. Back in the beginning, He spoke, and by that powerful word everything came into being. But when He brought forth the new creation, His Son was in that tomb. And when He said, "Come forth," that new creation was born.

And everything that has happened since, and that will happen to bring us to that final day when the new creation will become evident to everyone, began right there. That little seed going into the ground seemed like a small, insignificant beginning, but what an amazing, eternal harvest is resulting!

And, when He came forth from that tomb, He wasn't like He was when He went in. He came forth with a body just like the one that we who know the Lord will one day have. What a

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glorious hope! We're not going to have to put up with these earthly bodies forever. Thank God!

Some of you young people have no idea. You still enjoy the vigor of youth. Life still appears to stretch out before you. Never forget, however, that it is all temporary. If the Lord tarries, you, too, will one day grow old and feeble, and you will die.

But, thank God, this is not the end. This life is not what it's about. We're here for a little while to be prepared for what is to come. God is looking to implant seeds in the earth that will bring forth life forever.

So, Jesus accomplished the Father's purpose and an eternal creation was born. And it is something the Devil cannot touch! Can you imagine the shrieks of terror in the kingdom of darkness when they realized what had happened? They hadn't just lost a battle; they had lost the war!

Jesus has conquered death, they realized, and we have no power against Him! He can do as He pleases! His new body has no weaknesses. Nothing He does can be hindered.

And so, Jesus spent some time with His disciples so they would know for sure the reality of what had happened. "We have touched Him. We have eaten food with Him! We know that this is real!"

But He told them not to run and tell everyone yet, but to wait for the Spirit's power. And so, He ascended to heaven. They watched Him rise! Can you imagine standing on a hill somewhere, and suddenly someone standing in your midst begins to float up into the air? Well, they saw that! They were eyewitnesses of these things.

He rose until He disappeared into a cloud, and suddenly there was an angel standing among them. I imagine they were kind of shocked at that! The angel asked them why they were staring up into heaven. He told them that this same Jesus was going to come back as they had seen Him go into heaven.

And so, a few days later, there was a public outpouring of the presence of God by the Spirit that got everyone's attention and gave Peter the opportunity to preach the Word of God in a powerful way. Many of the people listening came to realize Who this Jesus really was. They had caused Him to be crucified; God had enthroned Him in heaven as Lord and Christ. Deeply convicted, they asked what they should do.

Peter told them to repent and be baptized and they would receive the same Spirit they had seen in manifestation. It wasn't about the particular manifestation. It was about divine life being planted in earth. And about 3,000 people were baptized and became citizens of the Kingdom of God on that day. And it has grown ever since, in spite of the overall condition of the church world. God has a people in the earth, and there's a crop that's growing.

And it was the same Peter who later wrote in 1 Peter 1:23, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through

the living and enduring word of God." (NIV). Do you see again the divine Gardener at work? It is about seeds again. God speaks a Word, and where that Word enters a heart and is received, it brings forth something eternal. A new life is born.

Think about this: The Word of God has life in it when God speaks it, even though it may come through human lips. If God speaks it and there is a heart that's ready, He is going to create in that person the same life that was in Jesus Christ. That's amazing. Praise God! That's what the gospel is about.

1 Peter 1:24 continues, "... all men..." Now he's describing the condition of the world and the life that we have simply as a result of being born into this world. He says, "All men are like grass ..." That's what you are this morning apart from Christ. Your human life is just like grass. One of these days you're going to get mowed and die!

"And all their glory ..." – oh, we look at people and how great they are, and their many accomplishments – "... all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord stands forever. And this is the word that was preached to you." Praise God! This is how God calls His people and begins to impart Himself to His people.

Now, look back a few pages to James, chapter 1, beginning in verse 16. "Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." Thank God!

Now here's the expression of His purpose: "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth ..." – Why? Where's He going with this? – "... That we might be a kind of firstfruits of all He created." That brings it together, doesn't it? You've got the Word, you've got creation, you've got fruit. Isn't it interesting, this recurring idea of God planting something that's going to grow up and produce fruit?

But notice what's going on here. Instead of us being the end of creation and then we mess it up as we did the first time, in the new creation we're the *firstfruits*. God is doing things in a different order. His Son lived as part of the old creation but with new creation life on the inside, and then He laid down His earthly life so that He could impart that divine life to others.

God's present purpose is to build the family of people who will rule over that new creation. When they are fully ready, *then* the rest of the new creation itself will be brought forth.

You read in Romans 8 about the fact that the creation itself is waiting! It's in bondage until now, a bondage of corruption. The curse is still here upon creation! It's waiting on you and me, in God's plan and purpose, until the crop matures and He's ready to say, "Here are My sons and daughters; I've done the job I purposed to do."

What an amazing picture is painted by all of this. Firstfruits are the first finished product of a harvest, aren't they? The Jews had the feast of firstfruits. They would plant crops in the spring, the rains would come, and then, a few weeks later, some of the crop would be ready to pick and eat and they would observe that with a special feast.

Folks, you and I, if we know Jesus Christ, are firstfruits of something God is doing that's eternal. And it's not because we are anything special. It's because of His work, His power, and His life, that has been imparted into this unworthy flesh. Praise God!

Now, turn back a few more pages to Hebrews, chapter 2, and notice another scripture that we have used many times. Let's tie these together.

Beginning in verse 5 we read, "It is not to angels that He has subjected the world to come" So now you have a reference to a world that's yet to come, don't you? Then the writer continues, "... about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified: What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet."

See, that goes back to the original creation, doesn't it? When God finished everything, it was beautiful, and then He created Adam and put him in charge.

"In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him." It's pretty obvious, isn't it, that we live in an out-ofcontrol world!

"But ..." – What do we see? – "... we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels ..." – He himself came down to our level – "... now crowned with glory and honor ..." – He's not here anymore. He's in a place of exaltation – "... now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."

Do you want to know how Jesus did what He did? It tells you, doesn't it? It was "by the grace of God." God gave Him the strength to do it. He didn't have that as a man. Why do you think He prayed? Angels came and strengthened Him. He occupied the same place in every respect that we do except that He didn't sin. He had to have divine strength to be able to do what He did. But God gave Him everything that He needed.

And He's going to give you and me everything we need to fulfill our purpose too. He never gives us something to do and says, "All right, I'm going to stand back and let's see you do it in your own strength." He says, "With everything I lay before you there's grace, divine help, to do what you've been called to do." Thank God!

But listen to how he expresses the purpose that's being fulfilled: "In bringing many sons to glory" Now that takes everyone else in. That's the "many" seeds, isn't it? "In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family."

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Wow! "So, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers." That's amazing! I can think of so many times when I've wondered, "How could Jesus not be ashamed to be called my brother? Look at me; look at my weaknesses."

But, thank God, there's a purpose, there's a heart that sees beyond all that is wrong now, all that is lacking. He knows the crop is not mature yet, but it's coming. There's life in it that will prevail. Praise God! Praise the Lord! So, many sons are being brought to glory!

Now let's look at 2nd Corinthians 5. Here, Paul is talking about his motivation, the thing that drives him to share the gospel. There's something that just pours out of his heart because he feels compelled.

And that's what he says in verse 14: "For Christ's love compels us" Now what fact, what understanding, caused him to see things the way he did? This is something we need to see. He continues, "... because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died."

Do you understand what he's saying? Paul didn't see people the way we're inclined to see them. Paul realized that when Jesus died, it was more than just Jesus dying. Everyone died!

Now, there's an out-working to that. But you can see the destiny of this world and of the world to come in what happened at the cross and the resurrection. It's all there. God absolutely destroyed one creation and brought forth another that will last forever. Everything that has happened since is an out-working of that.

Folks, if you are here and you were born into this world – and of course, you were – you're dead! God put you and me to death at the cross. Thank God! I needed to die! The life that I came into this world with is corrupt. It cannot be part of the new creation. And so, God put me to death.

But here's the other side of it. Why did He do this? "And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." What a picture! Everyone dies — but some live.

Is that not a picture of what's happened? Do you not see it? Folks, the people of this world have no clue. God has already judged them. He allows them to live out their earthly lives, but earthly life is temporary. They're just like grass, here today and gone tomorrow. Everything that is part of this creation is ultimately meaningless. But there are some who live! Thank God!

"So ..." Paul says, "... from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view." We don't see people the way others do. "Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

Praise God! Do you see how this all ties in? If we are ever joined to Christ, if the Word of God finds a home in the heart, then we become part of that new creation. It's not just about religious beliefs and practices and which group someone belongs to. Rather, there is a literal birth that

takes place, a new life that is born in the heart.

We who know Him were there when He died and we died with Him, but we were also raised with Him. That's what baptism is about. That's the meaning of it. We participate not only in His death but also in His resurrection. And so, we are part of a brand-new creation.

What is it that makes us part of the new creation? Anything of us? Some quality in us? No! It's a new life. It's His life that is imparted to us.

Now, this is a good place to look back at a very familiar scripture in John, chapter 3. This is where Nicodemus, a ruler, a teacher of the Jews, comes to Jesus. He sneaks in by night and wants to get some questions answered.

And Jesus, in verse 3, says "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." He doesn't understand. "How can a man be born when he is old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" That's the only way he could see things. It's a very earthly point of view.

"Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

You see, there are two kinds of life there. One is the life that we have by being born into this world, but there's another kind of life! That's the only kind that will be part of the kingdom of God. If you don't have that life, you don't have anything.

Oh, I tell you, I hope there's somebody here that God can bring face to face with the reality, "I need His life. I need Him to come and to live within me."

Now think, for a minute, about where Nicodemus was at. He had a religious heritage that looked back, despite all the traditions that had entered in, to something God had really done. God had given them laws through Moses. He had given them a system of sacrifices for sin.

But what was the nature of their relationship with God? Was it personal, intimate? No, it was very hands-off. God dwelt among them, but where did He dwell? He dwelled in one special place in the tabernacle, later in the temple, called the Holy of Holies. And at the entrance there was a curtain that could not be breached without someone dying. The only exception was that once a year, on the day of atonement, the high priest could enter. Even then he had to do it exactly as God had prescribed or even he would die!

What a witness that was to the great gulf between us and a holy God! It was a living demonstration that people could never possibly have a truly personal relationship with such a God, not based on the laws given to Moses. That's all he knew.

And not only that, his concept of a kingdom was an earthly Jewish kingdom, one in which Israel would gain a place of supremacy, free to chart their own course and be great in the world. God was going to honor them before the nations. That was what he had been taught to expect.

Jesus let him know that He had something totally different in mind. And Nicodemus couldn't even participate in that without being born again.

The problem is: what's born of flesh is just flesh! That's all it is. It can never be anything else. You can't fix it! You can't train it! You can't do anything to make it fit for God's kingdom! You've got to be born of God's Spirit to see His kingdom, to enter it, to have any part in it.

Oh, what scriptures there are in 1st Corinthians 15! I don't want to take a lot of time. There's a lot of scripture there but I want to try to get to the essence of what I'm thinking about here. Paul is talking about the reality of the resurrection and why it's necessary. The part I'm interested in begins in verse 35.

"But someone may ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?' How foolish!" Now listen to the language of this. Isn't this interesting? "What you sow" It's harvest language, isn't it? God, the Gardener.

Verse 37 continues, "When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body."

And he points out, on the natural level, that everything brings forth after its own kind. So down in 42 he says, "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable" It sure is! That's the one we live in right now. It is perishable.

"... It is raised imperishable" That's where God's going with this. The same kind of body that Jesus had when He was raised from the dead is what everyone in His Kingdom will one day have. (See Phil. 3:20-21.) "... It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Thank God, this is what He has planned!

And so, down in verse 49, "Just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven." Thank God!

Now this is the scripture that is so often read at funerals: "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" Is that plain? You see, God's building a Kingdom. He's doing it by planting His life in earth, and He's raising out of that something that is going to inherit eternal life. But in order for that to happen, the earthly part has to die. Are you getting that picture? It's a consistent picture throughout the scriptures.

So, "... flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." And this is the glorious passage, "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

"For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the

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Seeds of the Kingdom

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imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: Death has been swallowed up in victory"
Praise God!

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" And so forth. And then he encourages God's people. We have the victory through Christ, so don't give up. Be steadfast in your faith.

God wants to lift our eyes from where we're at and the context in which we find ourselves. This is just the earth. We're planted here. God has planted His life in us, and we are planted in the earth itself so that we might grow up to be what He has ultimately purposed, something eternal.

There is so much more about what God is planting in the earth. It's amazing. It's powerful. It affects every single one of us. And God has a kingdom that is absolutely growing up in Him. It is a crop in the earth. And it's real.

And I'll tell you, if Christ is in your heart, you are part of that. And you and I are growing up and when God is done with us, when that crop is mature, what's He going to do? He's going to harvest it, isn't He? And it's going to be ready. And I just praise God!

There are other things you could go into but I'm not going to take time today. God planted the kingdom when He planted His Son in that ground. The harvest began when He came forth out of that tomb with the life of a new creation.

When He began to speak that life into people on the Day of Pentecost, and ever since, those who have responded have become "seeds." And like the One who went before us, as we lay down our lives for Him and give them to Him, in whatever form that takes, there is another life that grows up and gets ready for that new creation.

And there's going to come a day when we will leave all of this behind and the new life will be all that is left. The seed will have absolutely produced the life that God intended when He planted it in us. Praise God!

I ask you, who is on the Lord's side? Folks, it's worth everything to be born again, to be born of His Spirit. If you don't have His life in you, you're not part of this. And so, I would ask you, do you want to be? If there's any uncertainty in your heart, do you want to be? Then, cry out to God! There's a God who says to us, if you seek Me with all your heart, you will find Me!

God's not looking for excuses to shut people out! He's not looking at your deficiencies and saying, you don't qualify because you're so bad. It's not about our badness or goodness or anything else. It's about God's power to save. What Jesus accomplished is more powerful than any need you and I could ever come up with. He is a mighty Savior.

The same power that overcame the grave on that day, will overcome everything before it's over! He who has begun that good work will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6). Praise God!

Part of His purpose though, is for us to be

here, planted in the midst of a dying creation. Otherwise, we'd get "saved," as we put it, and go straight to heaven. There's a reason He still has us here. This is the soil in which He is producing something that's eternal!

And we're going to have to live in a world that hates Him and learn how to die to it and live as foreigners in this world and love Him and serve Him anyway. But there's something in doing that that forms what we will become. If it weren't, God would do it some other way.

Listen to the words of Paul, giving us a heavenly perspective on all he had to go through in life and ministry: "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Cor. 4:16-18.

I'll tell you what, everything we experience here has everything to do with forming what we will be there. Praise God! So, all you seeds, go out and grow!

Christians in the Night

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SATAN AND THE CHURCH

But I am mainly concerned here with Satan's opposition to the Church of Jesus Christ. Though he is powerless to destroy genuine Christians in the ultimate sense, yet he ever seeks to destroy the effectiveness of Christians as lights in the world.

In opposing Christians, Satan seeks to do one of two things: to put them to sleep; or to make them drunk. 1 Thess. 5:6 exhorts believers concerning both conditions: "So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled." Verse 7 speaks specifically of sleep and drunkenness. Of course, sleep and drunkenness are spiritual conditions of which natural sleep and drunkenness are types and symbols.

The Bible is full of explicit indications that true blood-bought believers, possessing eternal life, bound for heaven, can be spiritually asleep in this world. In Matthew 25:5, Jesus indicated that when the time of the bridegroom's coming approached, both wise and foolish virgins would be sleeping. Note: wise virgins, having oil in their vessels, but asleep. These are true believers. In Matthew 13:25 in the parable of the wheat and tares we see that the enemy was able to sow his seed in with the wheat because, "everyone was sleeping."

To be asleep is to be at ease, careless, unaware of one's surroundings. All kinds of things can take place around a sleeping person, yet he knows nothing of what is going on in the real world. He is lost in the shadowy world of dreams.

The sleeping Christian is unaware of things happening around him in the spiritual realm,

which is the only real eternal realm. His mind is occupied by this material temporary world and its affairs.

In Romans 13:11, Paul wrote, "And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber" If that was true almost 2000 years ago, how much more important is it for us today to "understand the present time"?

1 Thess. 5:7 says, "For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night." The phrase "at night" stands out here.

We are nearing the end of a long gospel day. Though it has not always been a bright day yet there has been light, and the powers of darkness have been restrained to the degree necessary for the worldwide propagation of the gospel. John 12:31-32; 2 Thess. 2:7; Col. 2:15; Matt. 12:29.

SATAN'S INFLUENCE GROWING

But the day of grace is drawing to a close. The restrictions upon Satan are steadily dwindling as men reject God and are turned over to darkness. A deep spiritual night has fallen. Our world is "in the night."

Isaiah spoke of a time when, "darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples." (Isaiah 60:2). This prophecy certainly describes the condition of the world into which our Savior came long ago. Yet it also describes conditions in our day.

Today's darkness is more than a mere absence of light. It is the result of an intelligent conspiracy to destroy man. It is the result of demon power which blinds and deludes lost men. Though there is light in the world for believers, this is a darkness that exists in the minds of the children of destruction. It is the darkness of a man unable to see a blazing light because he is blind. II Cor. 4:4.

This demonic darkness is the prevailing condition of our world today. And it exerts a terrific force upon believers. All of us have experienced the difficulty of staying awake at a time of the night when we are normally asleep. Through habit our bodies and minds cry out for sleep. We yawn; our eyes grow heavy. Only a most determined effort will keep us awake. It is like that in this hour.

Though we are redeemed and possess eternal life, as long as we remain in these bodies, we will also possess the fallen adamic nature with which we were born. Though we are not compelled to obey it, the influence is there. Our old nature responds to the influence of our sin-darkened world like our bodies respond to the habitual time for sleep. Only a sober effort to combat this influence will prevent sleep from overtaking us.

Satan is using his new-found freedom in the world to bear upon the spirits of believers to cause them to quit fighting and go to sleep. He will do anything to cause them to become preoccupied with natural things to the neglect of eternal matters.

Great spiritual battles can rage around some Christians, yet they are unaware. The effects may stir them slightly, but they just turn over

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Christians in the Night

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and go back to sleep. They are useless to God in matters of the Kingdom and may even become unwitting tools of the enemy.

They dreamily serve a Christ of history or a Christ who will one day come, but do not hear the Christ who is speaking today as they are consumed with the affairs of this life, both secular and religious. And Satan knows how to appeal to people to keep them involved and busy.

In many parts of the world today, believers are systematically persecuted. They suffer the loss of possessions; of opportunities to prosper in this world; they are imprisoned and tortured; many are even losing their lives for Christ. But Satan's opposition to the Church in the western world has been much more subtle — and much more effective. Here he has posed as a friend, a benefactor, offering religious liberty, opportunity, comfort and ease. Storm clouds are indeed gathering but far too many remain asleep, unaware of true spiritual conditions.

Without a doubt the Church is purer and stronger spiritually where it is openly opposed. Christians have far less difficulty staying awake when there is a lion roaring at the door. But let the gentle breezes blow, bank accounts grow and the snores of sleeping Christians will almost surely follow.

With opportunities for indulging the appetites of "Adam" within us abounding, it is easy for spiritual realities to seem a bit foggy and unreal. We give mental assent to the doctrines of heaven, the Kingdom of God, angels and devils, spiritual warfare and the soon return of the Lord, but they seem dream-like beside our day-to-day interests in this world.

The Spirit of God cries, "Awake, repent, be sober, fight!" We start a bit in our slumber. Then Adam soothes us back to sleep: "Fight?! Fight what? You're doing fine. You're respected and liked by your friends. Your bills are getting paid. You're active in the church. Don't rock the boat. Look at brother so-and-so: he's not all upset and fanatical and he's a fine Christian, respected by all. Relax. Things are fine." And our minds are flooded with thoughts of the various activities that fill our lives and we slumber once more.

THE SPIRIT OF SLEEP

The whole atmosphere is pervaded with a spirit that is causing men to fall into a deep sleep. It is like a deadly gas and Adam is right at home in such an atmosphere. This spirit of sleep is a cover, however, for the greatest satanic onslaught against men the world has ever seen. Great battles are taking place. Eternal issues are at stake. Lives are being enslaved and destroyed.

Is it any wonder that God's word is: "Woe to you who are complacent in Zion..." Amos 6:1. What will God have to do to arouse us? Must persecution come before we awake?

"Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand." This passage in Joel 2 goes on to describe the destructive forces loose during this time. God's people are warned to turn whole-heartedly to the Lord. Blessings and restoration are promised. The passage ends with the promise that Zion would be a place of deliverance and salvation. God will have such a people. Will we be among them?

SPIRITUAL DRUNKENNESS

According to I Thess. 5:6-8, the possibility of sleep in the end time was not Paul's only concern: he also issued a clear warning against drunkenness. As in the case of sleep, this drunkenness was not literal but spiritual in nature.

Of course, natural drunkenness is intended to be a picture of the spiritual condition that concerned Paul. A man who is drunk is robbed of self-control. He lacks judgment. His behavior is often embarrassing and inappropriate to those around who are sober. Though awake, he cannot properly assess or relate to the realities of life around him. He becomes useless in any meaningful undertaking. He may even become a source of danger to others. His influence for good is gone.

Not only may his condition be thus described, but the instrument of his stupor is powerfully addicting. He cannot live without it. Psychologically, as well, he comes to need the fantasy world that alcohol helps him create.

Drunkenness of the spirit is like all of this and far worse. Isaiah 28 gives us a clear picture. Verses 1-4 graphically portray the delusion of religion without God: proud spiritual leaders in religious trappings impressive to the natural man, presiding over the ease and prosperity of drunken multitudes blissfully unaware of impending doom. This is a perfect picture of most religion including most of professing Christianity.

Some professed followers of Christ even have a form of godliness but there is no power. 2 Tim. 3:5. Not only is there a lack of power, but if God's power were suddenly to be manifested, no effort would be spared to suppress it. Consider the reaction of the good orthodox, Bible-believing religious folk of Jesus' day. That is what is meant by "denying its power." Religious man does not merely lack light; he hates and despises it and seeks at all costs to suppress and destroy it. John 3:19-20, 8:40.

THE "WINE"

The "wine" that keeps man in such a stupefied condition is the spirit of Satan expressed in religious doctrines and ideas. This wine fixes him up with a delusion that all is well when it is not. This delusion exists in the minds of men who embrace religious falsehoods.

And not only do they drink in the falsehood itself — that would be bad enough — but the authors of that falsehood come in to live as well — demon spirits long schooled in the art of deception. Demons have learned their craft over thousands of years of leading men astray. Thus, does Babylon become, "a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. For all the nations

have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries" Rev. 18:2-3.

How does this delusion gain such a strangle-hold on the world as a whole? The answer is simple — it is man's rejection of truth. 2 Thess. 2:11-12 says, "For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."

THE WRATH OF GOD

Rom. 1:18-32 shows the connection between the wrath of God and the state of delusion. "Wrath" involves turning man over to the darkness he loves — and chooses — to reap its fearful consequences.

Jeremiah 51 is a remarkable parallel to Rev. 17 and 18. In verse 7 we read, "Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord's hand; she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad." We clearly see that although the devil brings the delusive wine, the Lord sends it as the first step in judgment and destruction.

Note that in both Jeremiah and Revelation the cup is golden. One must never judge a cup's contents by its outward appearance. That is true both of the devil's cup and the Lord's. Jesus' description of the religious leaders of his day included these words: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence." Matt. 23:25.

Isaiah 29:9-13 presents a clear picture of spiritual drunkenness: "Be stunned and amazed, blind yourselves and be sightless; be drunk, but not from wine, stagger, but not from beer. The Lord has brought over you a deep sleep: He has sealed your eyes (the prophets); he has covered your heads (the seers).

"For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the scroll to someone who can read, and say to him, 'Read this, please,' he will answer, 'I can't; it is sealed.'
Or if you give the scroll to someone who cannot read, and say, 'Read this, please,' he will answer, 'I don't know how to read.'

"The Lord says: 'These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men."

CHRISTIANS AND THE WINE

This condition of drunkenness that prevails so completely as the end approaches affects real Christians in varying degrees as well as the lost. Why else would Paul exhort believers to "be self-controlled"?

Isaiah 28:5-8 portrays vividly the effect that this wine has wherever it prevails. Verses 7-8 read, "And these also stagger from wine and reel from beer: Priests and prophets stagger from beer and are befuddled with wine; they reel from beer, they stagger when seeing visions, they stumble when rendering decisions. All the

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tables are covered with vomit and there is not a spot without filth."

God has always had his remnant in the earth. Even so it is today that a remnant of God's saints is scattered through the systems of men where these conditions prevail. They cannot help but be affected by the wine. That is at least one reason Paul warns us against being taken captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy based on human tradition and the basic principles or this world rather than on Christ (Colossians 2:8).

I'm afraid that there have been many real believers who have been confused, abused, scattered and who could certainly be characterized as being "out of the way." Like Lot who pitched his tent toward Sodom and barely escaped with his life they are in no position to be profitable to God and his Kingdom.

"Out of the way." That's a serious condition, especially in light of the time. Only through a steady diet of God's anointed truth can we escape the stupor and vomit brought on by the wine. Yet even God's anointed truth itself will

have no effect on one who doesn't see his need and desire it from the heart. One might as well lecture a drunk on the virtues of sobriety.

By "anointed truth" I mean an expression of truth literally powered in its delivery by God's Spirit. Far too much preaching relies on human ability and tradition and is not a genuine present-tense expression of Christ, the only true Head of the Church. It may even be scripturally accurate, yet spiritually lifeless. 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." It is either Jesus himself speaking by the Spirit or it is people, at best, speaking about Jesus.

WHAT TO DO

It is an hour when God's true remnant must seek Him with all their hearts. Only Christ can lead his people safely through the "wilderness" of this present world. It is his job alone to build his Church — and to lead us as individuals to our places in it. The Lord's cup may not appear outwardly to be golden, but it contains the pure water of life.

Babylon is a scriptural symbol for the world system. It is not just the world of government

and secular culture but also of religion, including that which bears the name, "Christian," yet lacks the present-tense leadership and presence of Christ. Rev. 18:4 says, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues."

I am more persuaded than ever that God has abandoned much of professing Christianity and that deliverance is needed for His true remnant. It matters not that religious people gather in the name of Christ, sing "Amazing Grace" and preach many sound biblical doctrines. If God's power and life are not there. God is not there. Such places exist to bind up bundles of tares for the fire (Matthew 13:40). It is no place for a true born-again believer — especially now in the end of the age. Seek God!

It is night. The world is asleep, or drunk, or both. Passive indifferent Christians in this hour are in trouble and don't even know it. Consider the warning in Matt. 24:48-51 against carelessness at the time of Christ's coming. Indifferent Christians may prove not to be Christians at all. Half of the sleeping virgins had no oil. They were unaware of their lack until it was too late. We will see an accelerated process in the days ahead of separation involving apparent believers being overcome by wine or sleep.

As Paul said in Í Thess. 5:5-11, "You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

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Stat. Freq. WEMM 107.9 FM WWVA 1170 AM Location

Huntington, WV Wheeling, WV

Time 11:00 AM 9:30 PM

Television Broadcast

— (30 Minutes Weekly) —

Local Broadcasts

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

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

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

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

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

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Tues.-Sat.: 0015 UTC - 5.920 Mhz Mon.-Fri.: 0500 UTC - 9.830 Mhz Mon.-Fri.: 2000 UTC - 9.505 Mhz

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Please pray "...that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel..." **Ephesians 6:19.**

Romans 6:13

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.

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