

# Midnight Cry Messenger

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

Volume LXXVI: Number 1

A Quarterly Publication Of Midnight Cry Ministries, Southern Pines, NC JANUARY-FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021

## PERSEVERANCE

by Phil Enlow

*Adapted from a message preached at the Bible Tabernacle on January 5, 2020.*

I believe the truths that we most often need are not ones we haven't heard before. It's not that we simply need deeper and better information, although there's a place for that. God indeed wants to teach us many things, but the truths that we most need to hear are ones that we know intellectually but that need to become more of a practical reality in our daily lives.

And I was thinking about the coming year and asking the Lord, "What is it that you want us to focus on, as we think about the road ahead?"

And I just kept coming back to a simple word that we all know, and so I doubt I'm going to say anything brand-new this morning, but I'm praying that the Lord will bring it out in such a way that it will help us and encourage us in our walk. As I say, it's not always more information we need; it's life, it's ability, it's God's Spirit actually coming to bear upon our situation so that we have the strength to walk in those things that we know intellectually. And the word that kept coming to me is "perseverance."

A great place to begin is a very familiar scripture in Hebrews 12. Chapter 12 follows the famous faith chapter in which we read of many people who persevered by faith in all kinds of circumstances. Heb. 12 begins with the word, "therefore," which refers us back to the examples in the previous chapter, thus laying a foundation for what the writer is about to say.

In verses 1-3 we read, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

There are many folks in the land that try to portray the Christian life as one mountaintop after another. We're supposed to be joyful and happy with icicles running up and down our spines all the time, a life of never-ending blessings and good feelings.

And, praise God, He can and does bless His children. There are

things that He gives us that we can enjoy here. But a life of happy feelings all the time is not a realistic picture. There's no place where we arrive on a mountaintop and just coast, and there's no more effort to put forth.

The writer uses the word "perseverance" in terms of running a "race." And this race is one God Himself has marked out for us. It's a path that we follow. It's a way that we go that leads from where we're at to someplace else.

And the Christian life is indeed like that. Becoming a Christian is not a matter of simply signing something on a "dotted line," getting a ticket to heaven, going on about our lives, and then just suddenly, magically, going there. There's something that God plans to accomplish in your life and mine, here and now, in our daily walk.

Our walk has everything to do with what we will become. And it's not just a vague, generalized race that God has set before us. There's something particular: it's "marked out."

And we need always to remember, as we go forward, that we are unique. We've said it many times, but it's something we need to re-

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## Sudden Death Overtime Book Sampler

By Phil Enlow

### Author's Note

The articles that make up the material from which *Sudden Death Overtime* was compiled were first published in the *Midnight Cry Messenger* in 2001 and 2002. The reader should bear this in mind as some references — such as the events of September 11 — will seem "dated." In addition, there are references to Bro. Thomas in the present tense, whereas the Lord called him home in August 2004. While we miss him, the Lord is still here!

From time to time various ones have asked me about the possibility of producing a book out of the article series and I have sort of "put it on the shelf." More recently, however, I began to feel a renewed desire to share once again the burden that resulted in the series in the first place. To that end the series has been recast into logical chapters and — with some revisions — brought together here. And so, it is commended to the reader's conscience before God.

*"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."*

### Introduction

*"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." I Thess. 5:1-4.*

It is very evident from these verses that the Apostle Paul had done quite a bit of teaching regarding the course of the age and the coming

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PERIODICAL  
Postage Paid  
PERMIT NO. 347880

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

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

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

## Editor's Letter

Dear Saints,

Greetings once again in the wonderful name of our Lord Jesus! It seems rather obvious to say that this past year has been one of many challenges and difficulties. The world is still living with the many changes that have come about due to the virus pandemic.

I apologize for missed issues of the MCM, largely due to the the ongoing situation. Last year we combined two issues and then missed the fourth. Even now there are many places overseas where we still cannot reliably mail out copies. Nevertheless it is time to publish!

As I have thought about this issue I have gone back and forth as to what the Lord wanted. Finally I settled on the adaptation of a message preached at the beginning of 2020 that seems specially appropriate.

That message, entitled "Perseverance," proved to be a timely one. At the time, no one expected events to unfold as they did, but the Lord knew what was coming! He always does. And, He is always in control even when it seems as though the devil is having his way.

Believers are always called upon to trust God and continue by faith to "put one foot in front of the other" spiritually. We are called to a divinely ordained journey through this broken world with all its adversity.

I'm glad that in God's plan, everything the devil is allowed to do in his desire to hinder and overcome us is actually designed by our faithful Lord to accomplish something eternal in us. 2 Cor. 4:16-18, Rom. 8:28-30.

I know that in many places in the world things are much more difficult than they are here and we join with God's people in remembering every brother and sister in Christ.

Sometime ago, my attention was drawn back to a book I wrote almost 20 years ago entitled, "Sudden Death Overtime." I have included the introductory material in this issue and would encourage either obtaining the book or reading it online. It is more relevant every day.

We continue to look to the Lord in our local assemblies. In the beginning of the pandemic we omitted public services and often gathered using Zoom online software. After a few weeks we resumed services, trying to be careful in how we did things but we have also

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member. Everyone here is different. Each one of you has a particular course, a particular road, if you will, that is marked out for you, and it's designed to accomplish something in you because you have a unique place in the kingdom that God is building.

If you're one that's called to His kingdom, if you've been born of His Spirit and that's your destiny, then there is a particular place in His kingdom that only you can fill. Nobody else can. God has designed it just for you. And what He wants to accomplish in our lives has everything to do with that. I sense the Lord wanting us to move forward in a very real way this year. But if we're going to do that, we need to understand, realistically, what that involves.

I thought about Paul's first missionary journey. You remember how he and Barnabas set out and went through various cities, preaching the gospel message. They were persecuted, very severely in some cases, and yet in every place they gathered groups of believers, followers of Jesus.

And so, the time came to return home, and what they did was to reverse their course, stopping in and visiting each of these young churches to encourage and instruct the young believers. Now what do you think was the essence of Paul's message to those believers? What did he focus on?

Acts 14:22 tells us: "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." This was the essence of his message.

He didn't say, "Congratulations, you've entered in! Just come together, sing happy songs. Life's going to be great and grand. Your problems are over. Praise God!" He didn't say that! There is a price to pay to follow Jesus Christ! If you think that there is ever going to

taken advantage of our cameras to broadcast the services to those who weren't free for one reason or another to gather with us publicly.

The Lord has blessed despite the unusual circumstances. Of course, our special events, like the convention and youth camp, had to be omitted. We are just waiting on the Lord to see how things will unfold this year. Whether He allows us to gather as we have traditionally or not, we plan to simply move on in Him.

As time moves forward I expect it will get more and more difficult to be a Christian in this world, and yet, there is no need to be negative or discouraged as long as we keep our eyes on the Lord and trust Him. He has promised never to leave us or forsake us! Only eternity will reveal all He has accomplished as we walk roads we would never have chosen!

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

Your brother in Christ,  
Phil Enlow

come a time in your earthly life when it's just going to be easy with no opposition, then you have a lot to learn about how it really is!

I certainly don't sense the Lord wanting to emphasize this to discourage us, but rather that we have a realistic view of what it costs. Look at what it cost our Savior: the opposition of sinful men, and every kind of resistance the Devil could mount against Him.

I was thinking about the very word "perseverance" itself. Does it not suggest that there's an effort toward an end? We're not just sitting there twiddling our thumbs, waiting for heaven one day. We are having to put forth effort and it's toward a goal. There's a reason God has called us.

Think of Paul's words in Phil. 3:10-12 – "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." Paul realized that Christ had laid hold of him for a purpose. There was something that He wanted to accomplish but, in the process, there were things that Paul needed to lay hold of.

Does anyone here have things they need to lay hold of this year? See, that's what this is about. The Lord wants to bring us into possession of more of what He has provided for us. Thank God, that's everything that we could possibly need to fulfill His purpose for us. But for you and me, every single one that knows Him, there is ground that we need to possess.

There is a race. This race has a goal. It is founded upon a hope, not just, "I've got to do this." This is not the proverbial "hamster wheel" that we're on. It is a road that leads to a better place.

And there is a literal hope, an expectation, that if we go down this road, there's something at the end that's worth everything! It's worth leaving everything behind so that we can have that.

Anything short of that is short of the Gospel. No one can cling to this world and go after that, too. It's one or the other. There is a very clear choice that must be made between the two, according to the scriptures.

But does not the fact that he uses the word "perseverance" convey clearly the idea that there will be many things that will seek to hinder us, to hold us back, and to stop us, if they could? We have a Devil that is absolutely determined to put roadblocks in everyone's way who would follow Jesus.

One of the things the writer mentions specifically as a hindrance to our race is, "the sin that so easily entangles." I would say to everyone here, starting with me, whatever

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besetting sin, whatever is a weakness in our lives that we have tended to yield to, we will be tempted. We will be tempted this year! Don't expect to slide by. Don't expect that we're going to magically stop being tempted. Jesus wasn't. Temptation only ended for Jesus when He took a strong stand against it, and then only for a season.

I'll guarantee for everyone here, there are areas of our lives that God is dealing with, that He's working on. I know that there are in mine. Absolutely! There are areas where I don't tend to be as victorious as I'd like to be, as I need to be. I don't think I'm the only one.

See, this is something that we need to reckon on: you and I will be tempted. And God wants to bring us to a place where we experience more of the victory that He gave us. Paul, in Rom. 6, talks about the fact that when Christ died, we died with Him. And the way we gain victory is by reckoning on that, believing it, acting as if it's really true.

I've used this illustration in the past many times. Suppose we were conducting a funeral and there was a body lying before us in a casket. And then suppose someone blows loudly on a trumpet. Now, we who are alive would hear that, and we would react to the sound. But that person lying there wouldn't react. Now, it's not that the trumpet makes no sound, but rather, the person whose body lies in the coffin is dead to that. They don't respond to it anymore.

See, if you are waiting for a time, in this life, when there will be no more temptation, you are waiting in vain! As long as we are still in these bodies, they will continue to crave all the wrong things. Thank God for the promise of new bodies one day but right now our natural bodies will continue to "blow the trumpet" saying, "Pay attention to me. Feed me."

But what the Lord wants to do in every one of us is to teach us to stand up to that and say, "Wait a minute, I don't have to listen to that. I died in Christ." The more we reach up to Him and believe Him and ask Him, I believe He's going to give us the strength we need so that temptation won't have the power over us that it does now.

Sin is very addicting. We think of things like alcohol and drugs, for example, as very addicting because they have a physical appeal that cries out for more. But how many of you are willing to admit that that's true of every sin?

Every sin is addicting. You give into it and it's easier the next time to give in, and harder to say, no. We surely have no reason to look down on anyone who happens to be hooked on one of those things. Every one of us needs victory over sin! And Christ has promised that.

And I believe with all my heart, He wants us to be further down the road, at the end of this year, than we are right now. But we're going to have to go through some things to get there. We're going to have to face those temptations. And many times, those temptations will come when we are at our weakest point.

The Lord is going to teach us to trust in Him, to look to Him, and to find that victory. Every one of us is going to be tempted this year. Every one of us is going to go through dry times. The Lord has not promised us that we're always going to feel goosebumps serving the Lord, that joy is just going to flow out of us all the time, and if it isn't, something is wrong!

For those who've served the Lord any length of time, you know that there are times when your emotions will be dead as far as the things of the Lord are concerned! You will have nothing to look to and say, "I feel like serving the Lord." Everything will be contrary, and you can't even work it up.

And sometimes the Lord withdraws the sense of His presence. Does that mean He's left us? No! Because He's promised He would never leave us, never forsake us. But I'll tell you, there are times when He doesn't make His presence known, because we're not called to walk by feelings. We're going to have to learn how to exercise faith in those times. And so, I guarantee there will be times like that. Don't be dismayed when they come.

I mentioned the fact that we're unique. Don't you look around at other people and start comparing yourself with them. God wants each one of us to learn how to persevere in those kinds of circumstances. You're going to have sadness come into your heart sometimes. Something's going to happen that will really rock your boat, something you didn't expect, and there's going to be trouble in your life that you're going to have to face.

Do you think God just went to sleep and the Devil slipped in? Of course not! We serve a God Who knows what to do and when to do it to accomplish His purposes. And, whatever that involves, what does He want from us? He wants simple faith and trust. And He wants to see in us a persistence to say, "I don't care what happens, I don't care what it costs. If it costs me my life, I'm going on." But there will come those times. Don't you be dismayed when they come.

There will come conflicts between you and other people! In particular, the Devil loves to sow discord among brothers and sisters in Christ. The Devil will attack the church in every way that he knows! God wants us to be alert and aware!

Peter wrote, "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers

throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings." 1 Peter 5:8-9. God wants a people who are alive and awake, who realize they're in a battle, realize that there's a road to walk on which this world will oppose you in every possible way! But we can walk it, because we're not alone.

But it calls for people who are willing to pick up their foot and say, "I'm going forward with Jesus, no matter what." It's hard sometimes. The Lord knows our weaknesses and so does the devil. And if you've got a weakness when it comes to people and how they treat you, the Lord will allow the devil to cause someone to "push your buttons." We never overcome things without facing them.

And the Lord wants us to learn how to let go and let God have His way. Let Him work. Learn to be the person that He created you to be and not who the world says you are. He created us to be like His Son and all He does in our lives works to transform us into that likeness. Rom. 8:28-30. Praise God!

Sometimes, after we have been in the way for a long time, we reach a point in our lives where we say, "Oh my God, this is impossible." Well, you know, the fact is, if you've reached that point, you might have an advantage over somebody who thinks they can handle it, because the truth is, it is impossible. But I'll tell you, there's a God who knows how to bring us through.

Look at some of the examples in scripture of people and all the things that they went through. Think of what Abraham had to do. What was the thing that kept motivating him? He believed God's promises! God's promises trumped everything!

It is true that he struggled a bit in his faith at times. There were times he tried to do things on his own and it didn't work out like he thought it would. But he always came back to this: "God, You promised and I am banking my entire existence on the truthfulness of Your promise!" Folks, that's what it takes! That's what the Kingdom of God is about.

I thought about the example that we've used so many times of the parable in which Jesus told about the four kinds of soil, four kinds of people that hear the Word of the Gospel, but respond differently. The first kind has no capacity, whatsoever, to hear it. Our world is getting more and more full of people like that, who have heard and rejected. And their hearts are hard. The Word makes no impact on their lives whatsoever.

But there are two classes of people who actually seem to receive the Word, and yet, when you look down the road, there is no long-term result. One of them is on "rocky soil." Rocky soil is that in which the deep issues of the heart have never been confronted. Self is still on the throne down there.

The person has never really become aware

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of the depth of their need. They may have a superficial idea about the forgiveness of past sins, but they do not realize how totally unfit they are for the Kingdom of God! They don't know that they need a new heart and a new spirit.

That kind of person may hear about the benefits of the Gospel, they feel the presence of the Lord and they enjoy that, and they say, "Yes, I want that!" But in the parable, what happens? After a while it gets hard. You see? That's just the way it is. If you're going to serve God in this world, it's going to get hard. You're going to have hardness to deal with.

But these people say, "Wait a minute, I didn't bank on this! That's not what I want." They love the idea of Jesus loving them, forgiving their sins and taking them to heaven one day, but what they are really attempting to do is to "add" Jesus to their lives. Do you see the problem? They are saying, "It's still my life, but I'm going to add Him, because of the benefits I get from Him." And it doesn't work.

And one of the reasons God does things as He does, causing us to have to fight, causing us to have to press through, and stand in the face of all kinds of opposition, is to eliminate people like that. Because if that hard heart has never been conquered, if self is on the throne, they have no place in His Kingdom! God is going to conquer men through the Gospel or else they will perish. His Word is real! His purpose is real.

But there was another kind, wasn't there? In this kind of soil, the seed fell among thorns. There were other things that grew in that soil. What you have is another example of someone that tries to add Jesus to their life. "I've all kinds of things I'm interested in. I'm building a business. I'm doing this or that. This is what my life is about." And they hear about Jesus and, yeah, that sounds great, I'll add Him.

The simple truth is that you can't simply add Jesus to your life in any shape or form, because if your heart is in this world, that's what will define your life, that's what will define your destiny. We live here in this world, and God can help us to get along in it, but if your heart is here, and this is what matters to you the most, God will arrange circumstances where you will turn back and embrace the true desire of your heart.

We need to have a heart that says, "God, there's no quitting. There's no going back. I'm going on." We sing songs about that. There's no turning back. If you've got something less than that, you don't have what you need.

We mentioned that Heb. 11, the faith chapter, sets up and leads into Chapter 12, but there's something that leads into that. The whole book was written to Jews who had heard of Christ and perhaps, in varying de-

grees, had embraced the hope of the Gospel, but yet, the writer was concerned. He saw in them too much of a tendency to not let go of the past and their traditions, because after all, God spoke to Moses. So, the temptation was to attempt to simply add Jesus to Moses and the law.

And over and over again, the writer goes into great detail showing how God did something back then that was temporary. It was of God, but it was merely a shadow of the reality to come. Now, we have what is permanent. We leave the other behind. It's Jesus and Him alone! That's our hope.

All that the Old Testament Law pictured was fulfilled in Christ! There's no more sacrifice, but one, and that's for all time. And so, we leave that behind, and we lay hold of the hope of the Gospel, 100 percent, and trust in Him to be able to bring us all the way through.

So, on the heels of that, in chapter 10, what is the writer's conclusion? Verse 23 says, "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess..." The word "hope" speaks of something that we don't possess at the moment, but it's there and it's real. It's before us. We have enough of a conviction to give our lives to that hope, for that hope to become more real to us than this world in which we live. That's what the Gospel is about. It has to be that real.

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." Over and over again, you have this sense of a God who cannot lie, who has promised. He has had a purpose from all eternity. You read that in chapter 6, and that's the reason we're here this morning, because there is a God who has made you and me, all of us. He's made us a promise of something that we can participate in. He's called us to it. Praise God! Do we want to take that lightly, or just try to mix it in with our life and our will? No, of course not!

In the book of Romans, Paul spends many chapters clearly expounding the gospel message. And early on, in chapter 1, he deals with the issue of why the world is in the condition it's in, and it's because people have known truth but rejected it.

But then he comes, in chapter 2, to talk about two classes of people. One of them seeks for glory and honor and immortality, and they do it with a persevering spirit. They go against the grain. They go against the flow. Their whole life is defined by that quest. And everybody else goes on in sin and self-will, married to their lusts, their earthly desires, and they reject that. There are two very different kinds of people with two very different destinies.

It's interesting that he actually uses the word 'perseverance' in that passage. That's how we pursue life and immortality. Is that something that we can achieve? Through

Christ, we can, certainly not any other way. So anyway, we're told to hold unswervingly to this hope.

Now, here's another dimension that we need to recognize, and that's that we're not alone on this journey. Yes, we may have a unique, personal journey, but God has woven our journeys together. We, all of us, come to places where we are discouraged, we are struggling. We have battles that we need to fight. But thank God, we're not alone.

Yes, we always have Him, but we also have one another, and that's what God wants to bring to pass, to make a practical, functional thing. The church of Jesus Christ is not just a bunch of people who come together, have religious services and go on with their separate lives. It's a family, that loves one another, that watches out for one another.

Heb. 10:24 continues, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." Let's encourage each other. That's what it says in the next verse: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Does anybody here see the day approaching? Do you see the trend? I don't know the dates. I'm not going to worry about that. That's in God's hands, but I know where this world is headed. And so, here is the Word of God to us today. We need to be in a place to encourage each other.

The Devil is going to do everything in his power to divide, to give us a self-righteous, critical spirit, if we tend to be that way, to make us super sensitive toward one another. There are a thousand-and-one ways that our old nature of self-will and pride will rise up to divide us. We need to recognize it, discerning the true satanic inspiration involved! As Peter tells us, we need to resist the devil, firm in the faith.

God wants us to rise up and say, "We are one in Him. We will walk in the unity that Christ gave His life to provide. And when we see a brother and a sister struggling, we'll pray, we'll stand with them, we'll encourage them, because that's part of the battle that we fight. That's part of winning the battle." "Let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

And we don't need to have this mealy-mouthed Gospel that just kind of embraces everybody with this this happy, happy, lovey-dovey message, that doesn't really confront the problem of sin.

The writer continues, "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left." God knows to whom a scripture like this applies. I pray that God will be merciful to everyone that might come to your mind when

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I note such a scripture.

I don't know when someone has reached that point, but this is something to think about. To all I say, don't mess with this. Take it seriously. Your eternal destiny hangs on what you do with Jesus.

What's left? "... No sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." That's the world in which we live, the world that opposes us and hates us. That's the destiny they are choosing.

If you and I serve God, we're going to have to go against that. We're going to have to swim against the tide and be willing to do it and not give up, not hold back, because there's a God Who's going to take us through. But it's that serious.

But the writer goes on and encourages his readers. To paraphrase, he says, look, when you came to the Lord, remember all you went through. You were persecuted. You suffered things that we haven't even suffered here. These people had already stood up under that for a time.

Verse 35 continues, "So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere..." Ah, there's that word again! "... You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised."

That is central to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's not just believe in Jesus and go to heaven. This is, put your faith in Jesus Christ, turn your life over to His transforming work and for His purposes, and serve God until you die, until this life is over. Your life becomes defined by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His claim upon your soul.

If you don't have that, if this isn't real to you, cry out to God until it's real, until He reveals Himself to you! Do you see how serious this is? I don't know why I'm emphasizing this right now, but there has to be a reason. People need to know that this is serious.

But one thing is plain: there's a call of God to every child of God to face the facts that we're going to have to fight, and we're going to have to walk together, and lay hold of what He has given to us.

The writer continues, "For in just a very little while he who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." See, that was the issue here. Some people were coming up to the gate. They learned about the Gospel, and then, they kind of drew back and went back to their old ways. It was like someone who walks up to a door but doesn't actually enter.

We're going to have to press in. We're going to have to be among those who have turned

their backs, burned their bridges, and said, I am His, come hell or high water. If they line me up and shoot me, I'm still His. There's nothing in this world worth clinging to when He offers me that.

You know, it's like Jim Elliot, the missionary martyr, said: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." But that conviction can only be planted in the heart by the Word of God, that we open our hearts to and say, "Yes, Lord. I humble myself, I yield my life, I yield my everything to You."

I'm thankful that the writer has confidence in the genuineness of the people to whom he's writing. He does feel the need to say these things to perhaps warn some among them, but then he says, "But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved." And then, he launches into chapter 11. Praise God!

We have every reason in the world, looking back at these examples, to know that there is a faithful God. We might find ourselves this year in the same place that David did when he cried out in Psalm 13, "How long, O Lord?"

How many of you have ever been in that place? It's not only that what I'm facing is difficult, it just doesn't stop! It goes on and on and on, and I'm crying, and it doesn't feel like You're answering me. Oh God, what's going on? How long, oh Lord, am I going to have to put up with this?

I'm so glad that we can find a perfect balance between being reverent and respectful toward God, and, at the same time, having a hope and a confidence that we can come to Him with an honest heart. I don't believe that when David said, how long, oh Lord? he was being irreverent, but he sure was expressing how he felt.

You know, you're going to feel that way sometimes. Don't be dismayed by that. Don't say, something's wrong! Look at Brother so-and-so or Sister so-and-so: they're just happy, happy. They might be wearing a "pasted" smile and going through something worse than you are, for all you know. But God wants to bring us to a place where we're willing to fight, and we're willing to stand up.

So, of course, when you start talking like this, the question naturally arises, okay, I've got to find that somewhere. I've got to dig down deep and find this ability somehow to persevere. How's that going to happen? I'm just a weakling. I've failed so many times before. How in the world is this going to happen? Well, I guess we probably better look at some scripture, hadn't we?

How about Romans 15? Let's begin with the first verse. "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves." That's a pretty good exhortation, isn't it? You don't come to a place where you say, "Well, I'm handling it, What's the matter with you?" We need to help one another along.

If you're one that the Lord has taught, and you're experiencing some measure of victory, then you need to humbly say, "Thank You, Lord," and then help and encourage somebody else. God didn't do that just for you.

How many times did Paul say that the things that God has done in me and allowed me to go through where I was in over my head, and all I could do was cry out to Him, He did that so I could help you? Everything God does is not just for you; it's for the Body of Christ and His Kingdom.

"Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." Now, he goes back to the scriptures, because this is one of those things we need to remember. We're going to have to go back to the Word of God. It's not just for correct theology, it's a vehicle for God to speak to us as it relates to a present need.

It's great to learn about scripture, to get it in my mind and know what's true, but there are times that I have a deep need. Anybody else here? In those times I need to be able to go to the Word and have God shine a light on a particular scripture, and suddenly, it jumps off the page, and it feeds me, and it helps me. Often it involves an example of somebody who went through something difficult where God brought them through, and I can learn from that and be encouraged.

So, Paul says in verse 4, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope." See the place of the Word of God in this thing? The Devil is going to fill your mind and mine with every lie that we will accept.

May God help us to learn how to identify those lies, and not just say, but it's true! It is true that we are weak and unworthy sinners but that isn't the whole story! Christ came and died for people like us so we could become the very righteousness of God! 2 Cor. 5:21. And that's how God sees every one of His children!

We need to look at what God says, and not live by feelings, not live by past experiences. We talked, Wednesday night, about how we are to leave things behind. We forget things that are behind, we reach forth for what's before. It's a good time to do that, isn't it? We're reminded it's a brand-new year.

You don't have to carry all those past failures. We need to learn from them. But we need to come to God and say, "God, let this be the year when I grow, when I gain ground and I learn from You. Help me to devour Your Word and lean upon it and learn that this is how You speak to me, oh God."

They're, "... written to teach us, so that

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## Perseverance

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through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope." Now, that word "endurance," by the way, is from the same Greek word translated elsewhere as "perseverance" that we've been talking about. But there's a sense where you're going to have to push through and not give up. So, God uses scripture to give us encouragement and hope.

All right, here I am again! Lord, I've got to have courage, I've got to do all this stuff. How do I do that? "May the God who gives endurance..." Ah, now, that puts a different light on it, doesn't it? He's not just dumping all this stuff on me and saying, come on, be strong. What's the matter with you, you weakling? I've called you to fight. Get up off your rear end, and fight.

He's not calling us to dig deep and find this in human strength. This is a word that is meant to encourage the weakest of the weak who have put their trust in Christ. My hope does not lie in one single thing that I can find in me. Every time I've tried to depend on my own strength and figure I've got it handled, I fall like Peter did. It doesn't work. Of course, even when I do that, the Lord helps me to learn from it.

But listen to these words. "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." That's where it all comes from. Every bit of the ability to do everything we've been talking about this morning has got to come from Him. That's why scripture says, "looking to Jesus."

Now, if you're like me, when I run into a wall, whether it's an experience, whether it's something on the inside or on the outside, or I'm just worn out, and don't feel like fighting anymore, where am I looking, typically? I'm looking inside.

You see what the Lord wants us to learn to do? Every time we hit that wall, we need to be able to say, "Lord, You've allowed me to hit this wall so that I can look up. You have everything that I need." It's those who wait, those who hope in the Lord who do what? Renew their strength, because we all get weary.

The question is not, will we come to a place where we don't ever get tired, don't ever get weary, are never tempted to feel that way? Of course not. The question is, do we give into that and say, "Well, that's just the way it is. I'm just a weakling. Poor me?"

God, help us to learn to lift up our eyes and know that we have a God Who is able to do more than we can ask or imagine. He longs to show up and lift us up and bring us through something we could never possibly handle in

any other way. You don't have the wisdom. You do not have it in you to love somebody that really rubs you the wrong way, pushes your buttons, a thousand-and-one things that pull on your old nature and cause you to try to yield to that.

If we will open our hearts and believe His promises, God will give us what we need to put one foot in front of another and say, "God, I'm Yours. I'm going forward. I will not be beat down or defeated by this thing."

We are facing another year. We will face many things. Don't you charge forth into the coming year expecting nothing but mountain-tops of feelings and experiences. That's what you will hear in many places.

You're going to have a lot of battles. But every battle that God sends your way, He has designed so you can experience a victory that you would never experience any other way. And what He wants is for us to come to the end of the year and be stronger, have a deeper hope, a deeper, more experienced faith than we have right now.

God wants us to be able to look back and say, "Look what He's done. Thank God! Yes, there are still battles, there will be battles to fight as long as we're here, but God has brought me down the road, because when I faced those things, I didn't just look inside. I didn't just cry and feel sorry for myself. I looked up, and Jesus gave me His strength, not just His example, but His life and His strength, and He enabled me to handle it."

There is nothing new in what we're talking about, but this is a Word that we need. We need to take an honest look at what the Christian life involves in the world in which we live. It is a battle. Some of you may lay down your lives, literally, for Jesus. Is that worth it? Is there anything here that's worth rejecting Him so that you can have this? A lot of people think there is.

It's worth everything to serve Him! There's no reason to grow weary and give up. We do sometimes get weary, but there's no reason to give up because of it. There's always that call from heaven to lay aside the things God puts His finger on, and say, "Lord, give me the strength I need today."

I don't have to be bogged down with worry about next month or next year; I can just focus on today. Lord, help me today just to put one foot in front of another, and trust You for the strength to be able to do it, and to know that You are faithful. That's how the Christian life works.

That's what I stand upon. I don't stand upon my ability to be faithful. Good luck with that kind of thinking! You don't have what it takes, and I don't either. We are in a battle that is way over our heads, but it's not over His. And He has promised to finish what He has started.

So, let's go forward into this year with a

realistic look at what we face but also with a confident look at the resource that we have to draw upon and where it's taking us. It's taking every single one that has put their trust in Him to a better place, and we will look back and have reason to give Him the praise and the glory.

We won't be able to look in the mirror and say, "Look what you did." We'll say, "God, in spite of what I am, look at what You did. Praise Your Name!" To God be the glory. Praise God!

## Sudden Death Overtime

*Continued From Page 1*

of Christ. They knew what to expect. They understood how it would be. They knew that all history was pointing toward a day known as "the day of the Lord," a day of utter destruction. They knew that, for the people of the world who did not know God, the coming of this day would be sudden and totally unexpected, and that it would be impossible for them at that point to escape. The reason that day would come so unexpectedly is that the people of the world would be "in darkness." God's people would have light and not be surprised by the day of the Lord, nor caught up in the sudden destruction it would bring.

I believe it is likewise evident from this passage, and indeed, from the Bible as a whole, that God is very much interested in giving His people light and understanding on the world in which they must live. This includes light regarding particular times and seasons, such as the days immediately preceding the coming of Christ. That is not, of course, to say that anyone but the Father will know the day and hour (Matt. 24:36), but He does desire that we be able to know and recognize "times and seasons."

### Why?

More and more I hear people express bewilderment at the things taking place in the world. People just cannot understand things like the Columbine High School massacre, or how a woman could suddenly drown her five young children in a bathtub. What's wrong with people? They cannot understand why churches are in the condition they are in. They cannot understand the persistence of wars and other violent conflicts. In general they just cannot quite comprehend why things in this world are the way they are. We should do something! — but what?

And now, since I wrote the above, we have seen the devastating terrorist attack of Sept. 11. Multitudes who felt reasonably safe and complacent have been shocked into a state of fear and uncertainty. Jesus spoke of a time when men's hearts would be "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which

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## Sudden Death Overtime

*Continued From Page 6*

are coming on the earth." Luke 21:26.

Does God want His children to be confused, bewildered, fearful? Of course not! He desires that we have light, that we understand the world around us. We may not be able to fully expound God's purposes for every particular event but the bottom line is that nothing should surprise us or cause us to be dismayed.

If you are one of His, He wants you to have light on your pathway in spite of the prevailing darkness round about. He wants you to have a rest in your soul knowing that He is able to finish what He has started. He wants you to know at all times that He has everything under control and that all is proceeding according to His wise plan. He wants you to find in Him a true hiding place from the dark tempest that is engulfing our world.

For some time now I have had a growing burden to share with my fellow believers such understanding as the Lord has given me of what is happening in our world and where we're headed. I certainly don't profess to have anywhere near all the answers — after all, God has ordained that we walk by faith — but I have lived for many years with an inward sense of where we are in the broad picture of things and my burden is to share this.

There is no boasting whatever implied. If any of us truly knows anything at all it is by sovereign grace alone and it must be understood in the context of the Body of Christ — for we are members one of another. Rom. 12:5. We have gifts that differ yet all are given for the benefit of the whole.

The responsibility falls upon you, the reader, to seek God from your heart as to whether this burden is from the Lord or not. If it is not, nothing will come of it. If it is, the Lord will accomplish His purpose in the hearts of those for whom it is intended. If it is, and you reject it, you are not rejecting me, but the Lord and His desire to give you light.

## Food for Thought

Luke 17:26 "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 "It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. 29 But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

In both cases, what happened to those "left behind"? How many of them? That's what Jesus said about His coming. Compare Matt. 24:36-44.

## BOOK CORNER

### **Delivered From Demons**, by C. Parker Thomas

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

### **Does God Speak To You?** by C. Parker Thomas

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

### **Examine Yourselves**, By Phil Enlow

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

### **The Gospel**, By Phil Enlow

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

### **How Do You Know You Are Right?** By Phil Enlow

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

### **Immortality**, By Phil Enlow

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

### **The Keys of the Kingdom**, by C. Parker Thomas

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

### **Light in This Present Darkness**, by Phil Enlow

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

### **Lying Signs and Wonders**, by C. Parker Thomas

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

### **The Midnight Cry**, by C. Parker Thomas

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

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

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

### **Sudden Death Overtime**, by Phil Enlow

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

### **The Sure Foundation**, by C. Parker Thomas

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

### **Tongues: My Testimony**, by C. Parker Thomas

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

### **What About Genesis?** by Phil Enlow

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

### **What Does Deception Look Like?** by Phil Enlow

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

### **Your Adversary**, By C. Parker Thomas

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

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

**Midnight Cry Messenger**

P.O. Box 685

Southern Pines, NC 28388 USA

# BEING MADE LIKE CHRIST

By Merilea Bigham

On Wednesday night, since we had no service in Ramona Park for lack of water in the church, Bob and I zoomed with Columbia and were blessed. Rudy made a comment of how he saw a picture of God with an ear to listen to us when we call in need. I'm glad that he does hear, however he wants us to listen with his ear.

Later during the night thoughts flooded my mind of God's purpose to make us more like Him so that we can manifest His Spirit and have an ear to hear our brothers' and sisters' needs. The first thought brought me first to the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the king-

dom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

We are truly blessed because God is working these things in us. Our trials are not to hurt us but make us more like Him who created us. He is doing the work, not us.

Then, in thinking of these things, the thoughts of the gifts of the Spirit and the fruits thereof came to mind. In Ephesians, Paul talks about how we should be: "lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unit of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Then in Galatians 5:22-23 – "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Notice in both references, longsuffering and meekness are mentioned.

These fruits or attributes are the ones that God wants us to be like. He wants these words to be, not just words on a page, but His words written in our hearts that become a part of our life. Then when they become so much a part of our lives we can walk in the Spirit manifesting all these things.

For a while I struggled with my place in the body. As a woman I knew that the Scriptures plainly said "Let the women keep silent in the Church." I prayed and prayed asking God for answers to my questions. One night again the thought came to me that Brother Thomas had written an article about women's ministry in the Church. Then the next day I went through my stash of MCM's and, wonder of wonders, the very first paper had the article, I think the name was "Women's Place in the Ministry." Wow, God is good. That article gave me peace in understanding a little more.

Now, in thinking of this in relationship to being made like Christ, I understand a little more. As God is changing us by causing us to go through necessary trials to put to death our sufficiency and bring to light His excellence.

When we speak in His Spirit, we are no longer men or women; it's His Spirit being made manifest. Of course that doesn't make us proud or perfect. We still have the earthly body to contend with. It only enables us to serve as His body in the earth. We are one body, created by one Spirit and are made to drink of the same Spirit.

There are so many other Scriptures that come to mind and really, if you listen, you'll see that most of the Bible confirms the fact that God wants a people to walk and talk with him. He is the only one who can change us by giving us His Spirit so that we can be like Adam was at first and walk and talk with Him and each other. We can be one with Jesus and the Father as Jesus prayed for. Hallelujah!

We need to rejoice in the fact that we can be full of rest and peace and joy that passeth all understanding even though the world is full of unrest and lack of peace. Thank God, He is changing us to be made like unto Him. I'm a candidate.

## Broadcasts

### Television Broadcast

— (30 Minutes Weekly) —

#### Local Broadcasts

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

Birmingham-Tuscaloosa, AL - WVUA TV-23  
Sun. 6:30 AM

Cheyenne, WY - KGWN TV-5  
Sun. 6:30 AM

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

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

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

Joplin, MO - KODE - Ch. 12 ABC  
Sun. 6:30 AM (Starts 4/4/21)

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

Macon, GA - WGXA TV-24  
Sunday, 6:30 A.M.

Milwaukee, WI - WMLW-TV 49  
Sunday, 7:00 A.M.

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

Minot-Bismarck-Dickinson-Williston, ND  
KBMV/KCMY 17/14 - Sunday 7:30 A.M.

Monroe, LA - KMCT-TV 39  
Sunday, 7:30 A.M.

Palatka, Florida - WJGV-CD 48  
Sunday, 6:30 A.M. and Monday, 3:30 A.M.

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

Pittsburgh, PA - WPGH-TV FOX  
Sunday, 6:30 A.M.

Rapid City, SD - KEVN-TV 7.1 Fox  
Sunday, 6:00 A.M.

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

Sioux City, IA - KPTH TV-14 CBS  
Sunday, 6:30 A.M.

Springfield, MO - KOZL TV-27 My Network TV  
Sunday, 6:30 A.M. (Starting 4/4/21)

Topeka, KS - KTMJ TV-43 FOX  
Sunday, 6:30 A.M. (Starting 4/4/21)

### RADIO STATIONS

Monday - Friday

Stat.	Freq.	Location	Time
WDJS	102.5 FM	Goldsboro, NC	9:00 AM
WEMM	107.9 FM	Huntington, WV	11:00 AM
WDJS	1430 AM	Mt. Olive, NC	9:00 AM
WWVA	1170 AM	Wheeling, WV	9:30 PM

### Short Wave Radio

WWRMI Radio Miami International  
South America and the Caribbean  
Mon.-Fri.: 9:45 AM Eastern time - 9955 KHz  
North America and Canada  
Mon.-Fri.: 7:15 PM Eastern Time - 9395 KHz

Voice of Hope World Radio Network  
South, Central, and West Africa  
Mon.-Fri.: 1530 UTC  
4965, 6065, 9680, 11680, 13680 kHz  
Available via live webstream at:  
[www.voiceofhope.com](http://www.voiceofhope.com)

### TV Network Broadcast

— (30 Minutes Weekly) —

#### The NRB Network (DirecTV 378)

Sunday - 6:30 AM Eastern  
Monday - 3:30 AM Eastern

#### VTN - Little Rock Arkansas

Online or Cable  
Sunday - 1:30 PM Central

#### SacFaith TV - Sacramento, CA

Monday - 8:00 AM Pacific Time  
Tuesday - 8:30 PM Pacific Time  
Watch Online or on Cable Channels  
Comcast 20 / AT&T 14 / Consolidated 19

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.

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